

Rick Mercer takes a mouthy academic to school P.24

CONRAD SAYS... P.44

LE DEADBEAT
Canada's economic basket case wants another handout P.16

WHAT REALLY TURNS WOMEN ON P.42

MACLEAN'S

MAR. 19th 2007

CANADA'S MAGAZINE OF THE YEAR
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LOOK WHO'S 50!

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Wasn't al-Qaeda's evil genius supposed to be dead by now? Instead, he's another year older and closer to victory than ever. P.26

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MACLEAN'S

VOLUME 120 NUMBER 10, MARCH 19, 2007 • SINCE 1905

2 From the Editors 4 Mail Bag
6 Seven Days

MARCH 19-26, 2007



COVER PHOTOGRAPH: AP INSET: CP THIS PAGE: OWEN FRANKEN/CORBIS

THIS WEEK

Interview

14 LIFE IN PRISON
Kate Fillion talks to Sue Urahn about America's exploding incarceration rates

Columns

6 CAPITAL DIARY
Mitchel Raphael on who works out to Eminem, and the PM's new *French Kiss*

9 PAUL WELLS
Where Stephane Dion and the Liberals have gone wrong

10 BARRARA AMIEL
Hijabs on the soccer field? Fine. It's the spirit of entitlement that riles

National

16 LE DEADREAT
Controlled by unions and stuck on big government, Quebec is in economic peril—and doing very little about it

19 STELMACH ON THE ROPES
The new folksy Alberta premier's mistakes could lose him what counts: Calgary

22 ND TYPICAL LIBERAL
Navdeep Bains plays both sides of the ethno-political divide

24 MERCER LASHES OUT
Comedian Rick Mercer defends the troops in Afghanistan in an attack on a Memorial professor

25 SEISMIC SAFETY
Quake-proofing B.C. schools, family time is the new green, a beer thief comes clean

World

26 COVER STORY
OSAMA'S 50TH
As bin Laden celebrates another year of freedom, the West must face the fact that the war on terror has tipped in his favour.

THE BACK PAGES

50 TV
Women love *Dexter*—a serial killer who murders bad guys.

54 Steyn
Slavery wasn't a freak perversion. It was a fact of life

56 Media
Why would the Aspers want to helm *The New Republic*?

57 Film
300 embraces the joy of war and beauty of violence

58 Help
How to take care of yourself after receiving a bad diagnosis

60 Taste
Why French cuisine is an "intangible cultural heritage"

62 Feschuk
Tinseltown gears up to take down global warming

63 Recommended List
Cillian Murphy's rising star and *Friday Night Lights*' last stand

64 The End
Eric Whitehouse, 1972-2007

World (continued)

50 KING OF THE ROAD
Canada needs a "border czar" to deal with the U.S.'s arbitrary land-crossing rules

51 CHINA'S ARMY GROWS
Beijing's new military spending, Danish unrest, and the new Rumsfeld takes action

Business

52 PROSPERITY REPORT
Canada needs to rethink how it works: taxes and spends to stay competitive with the U.S.

36 TAKING TIME OFF
Unlike workaholic Americans, Canadians opt for vacation time over disposable income

38 LOSING TO THE YANKS
Our standard of living has slipped—we're now a full 20 per cent behind the U.S.

59 LYING FOR WIKIPEDIA
Wikis, Essjay, straws that make milk yummy, water goes public

Adventure

40 LOST IN SPACE
The harrowing tale of three astronauts, stranded in orbit, who barely made it home

Home

42 HOW TO TURN HER ON
What do women really want? A man who'll take out the garbage *and* do the dishes

Justice

44 'I AM PROUD'
Conrad Black reflects on his successes and looks forward to the verdict of a fair trial

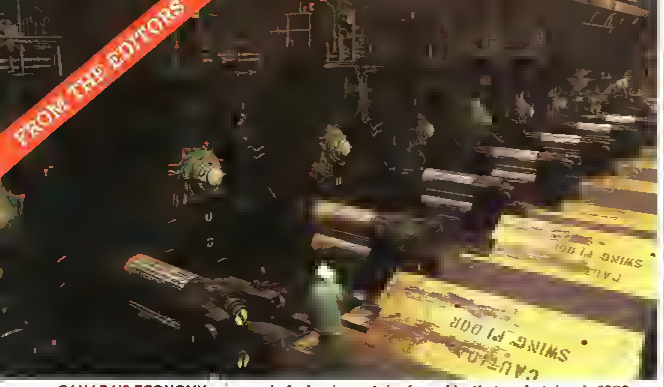
Health

47 MIND AND MACHINE
A powerful, tiny microchip implanted in the brain, could mean the end of seizures

Newsmakers

48 'MEN CAN BE SOFT'
Jim Jones's son makes the best of his dad's legacy, and Angelina Jolie takes an interest in a Calgary mum's story

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CANADA'S ECONOMY is in need of a fundamental reform, like that undertaken in 1982

Finding the path to Canada's prosperity

There are no great secrets to creating a more prosperous country. There is no mystery surrounding the steps that need to be taken if we are to make Canada competitive with our neighbour to the south, not to mention Asia's emerging economic Goliaths.

By now, the fundamentals ought to be well known: more spending on high technology, more investment in public education and training, a tax system that encourages growth rather than punishing it, and a corporate culture that rewards bold leadership and international success. These are the priorities repeated over and over again in studies by the Conference Board of Canada, C.D. Howe Institute, Fraser Institute, Canadian Council of Chief Executives and other right-of-centre think tanks and lobby groups.

But this week, in the pages of *Maclean's*, the Institute for Competitiveness & Prosperity lays out the most compelling argument yet for a fundamental re-examination and reform of the Canadian economy. Spearheaded by institute chairman Roger Martin, the respected head of the Rotman School of Management at the University of Toronto, the "Agenda for Canada's Prosperity" (page 32) describes this country's economic potential in stirring terms, and provides a road map for how to get there.

If there is one critical message to take away from the institute's work it is this: a stronger economy isn't about creating breaks for the rich at the expense of the rest of us. It's about creating more wealth for the benefit of all—an average of $12,000 more for every household, plus billions more in increased tax revenues for government to bolster the health care system, protect the environment and make our communities more livable.

To find the true source of these basic economic prescriptions, you need to go back to 1982 and the massively influential Macdonald commission. Appointed 25 years ago by the Trudeau government, the Royal Commission on the Economic Union and Development Prospects for Canada, chaired by former Liberal cabinet minister Donald S. Macdonald, produced a 72-volume body of research and a set of policy recommendations over its three years that continues to influence Canadian economics and politics from freer international trade and less punitive taxation, to a more rational and progressive system of employment insurance, and less government interference in the economy. These were revolutionary changes that brought Canada into the modern era.

Today, Roger Martin acknowledges the echoes of the Macdonald commission in his own work. "Donald Macdonald is a hero in my eyes," he says. "He developed a cogent and clear argument backed by data that convinced Canadians to change their way of thinking. People didn't believe it could be done, but he did it."

And we can do it again. If we are willing to listen, and to act in our own interest, future generations will be able to afford the kind of lifestyle that we enjoy, and more. Prosperity doesn't mean choosing between wealth and happiness, and it doesn't mean giving up the things that make Canada distinct and great. It means choosing to have it all. M

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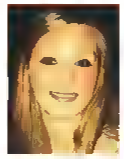


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MAIL BAG

'There is a list of people who should feel deep guilt and sorrow at the loss of Katie Merkel'



HÉROUXVILLE AND BEYOND

IN THE LATE 1940s, when we political refugees from war ravaged nations of Europe arrived in Canada, we were told of its laws ("Do immigrants need rules? The debate rages on," Cover, March 5) We were told to keep our noses clean, fall in with the rest of the local population, and not rely on any social assistance. We had to wait for five years to be considered for citizenship If we became a burden for Canada, we were assured of a reverse trip to the old country Even though we did not wear our national garbs daily (we were aching to assimilate), we were still often sworn at or told to speak English. For Canada's blessedly fortunate new immigrants, we need no epithets, but we do absolutely need rules. The first one should be, do not perpetuate the ways and hatreds of the countries they left behind

Edmundas Petrauskas, London, Ont.

I can't think of any other country in this world whose immigration policy is, "Welcome. Let us know how you can assimilate us."

Eve Crandall, Toronto

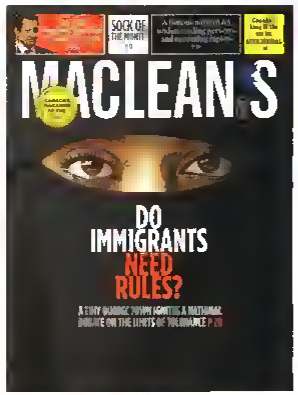
I WAS SHOCKED that professor Mohamed Elmasry believes that supply and demand should be the rule of thumb regarding accommodation for immigrant communities. Does he not know about the Canadian human rights code? He says that if a "critical mass" of people demand male driver's licence inspectors, then meet the need. Really? Hire more men because a segment of our society does not want to be served by women? Should the laws of supply and demand determine who will serve us at the bank, the post office or the hospital? What if a part of our society does not want to be served by someone black, Jewish, homosexual or disabled?

Catherine Beagan, Scarborough, Ont.

MANY PEOPLE INSIST that immigrants should abide by Canadian culture. How would one define that? New immigrants are flooded with rampant materialism, licentious living, immodest attire and claims about being Christian from people who have never opened a Bible or rolled out of bed to visit a church. Is this worth emulating? Further more, if immigrants are never invited to a Canadian house, how can they witness how we live? In order to understand immigrants, all one needs is tolerance and sympathy, not rules meant for one group to follow, while the other group coldly observes them without making an effort to reach out.

Maria Jacob, Mississauga, Ont.

YES, IMMIGRANTS NEED RULES. And so do we if we move to another country, or even go as tourists. We need to know what customs are acceptable and what aren't in order to avoid embarrassment or, in the extreme, arrest and jail. Asking for curtains at a community pool to shield women and altering a curriculum so pupils won't have to draw



people are going too far. I believe the residents of Herouxville have uncapped some strong feelings that are felt across Canada.

Irene Stokes, Mississauga, Ont.

YOUR WRITERS Benoit Aubin and Jonathon Gatehouse say that the Hérouxville declaration has become a worldwide embarrassment. For whom? Certainly not for me. I say congratulations to the good people of Herouxville for being clear in their expectations of the behaviour of newcomers. What is acceptable in one culture may not be here. Quite frankly, if you do not want to learn English or French or deal with women in authority, then perhaps you shouldn't be here. So yes, our rules do need to be spelled out if only to ensure that everyone understands what is and what is not acceptable. Better to deal with it upfront.

Victor Kutcher, Burlington, Ont.

Multiculturalism as part of a pantheon of achievements? Don't make us laugh! Anyone who believes a nation can be strengthened by promoting ethnic difference is dangerously naive. The simple fact is that the silent majority in this country has been forced into that position through imposed government legislation, institutionalized academics, and the left wing media. Any intelligent questioning of immigration levels, employment equity, or multiculturalism leads to the typical uninformed liberal backlash of name-calling and ostracization.

Jim Willis, Gananoque, Ont.

A SIMPLE RIDE HOME

THE TRAGEDY of Katherine Rose Merkel's short life is caught in your headline ("She was a normally cautious teen who tried and tried to find a way to get home safely after a party," The End, March 5). I was terribly saddened by the story. How did Katie manage to find herself at a party with no ride home at 1:30 a.m.? Fourteen years old, for goodness sake. Her parents thought she was bowling? Then, she was apparently abandoned by friends and refused safe harbour by another girl's mother, only to have the fatal blow delivered by an allegedly drunken 23 year-old stranger who invited her into a car already full of teenagers. There would seem to be a long list of those who should feel deep guilt, as well as great sorrow, at the loss of Katie Merkel. Her tale should be read in every school and every home, and perhaps parents and friends, and perhaps strangers, will think of the consequences of complacency and thoughtlessness and abandonment of those who ask for something as simple as a ride home.

Susan Barrie, Rye, N.H.

STANDING AGAINST EVIL

JANE DOE'S ARTICLE ("Release and catch," Justice, March 5) struck a terrifying chord. While I was a member of the RCMP in October 1973 I arrested a man in Nanaimo, B.C., for the rape of a 12 year old girl. Two plainclothes officers took him away before I had even gotten the handcuffs on him. Some eight years later, I saw his picture in a newspaper. It was Clifford Olson. While he confessed to only 11 murders, I was told that over 100 files were closed when he was put away. The parallels between Olson and the so-called Balcony Rapist are significant. Olson was known to the police. He was out on his second mandatory release. He was free with no meaningful restrictions. I can find no reasonable argument that our society should allow these kinds of people to roam free among us. We should have a prison city somewhere where they would spend the rest of their lives working at some productive occupation, permanently separated from the mainstream of society. What price do we pay by sacrificing the lives of innocent people on the altar of justice to maniacs and perverts? May God forgive us for our weak stance against evil.

Don Meister, Saskatoon

'In a war, is it not expected that one will come across thousands of contusions? I'd rather be caught by Canadians than Afghan insurgents.'



JOHN D MCHUGH/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

HOORAY for Sean M. Maloney. He tells of an Afghan attack on Canadian soldiers that left two with "their legs horribly mutilated," yet he saw "more energy expended by Ottawa and the PRT over the welfare of those detainees than over the welfare of our wounded soldiers." Fortunately, those soldiers are not among those who have lost their lives. As for Amir Attaran bringing to the world's attention the contusions and abrasions on some Afghan detainees held by Canadians, in a war, is it not expected that one will come across thousands of contusions? If I were in that conflict, I would prefer to be caught by Canadians than Afghan insurgents.

Paul Francoeur, Ottawa

DETAINEE ABUSE

SEAN M. MALONEY'S article about the alleged abuse of detainees in Afghanistan by the Canadian Forces fails to analyze the pertinent issues ("Proceed with caution," National, Feb. 26). By criticizing a law enforcement oversight and accusing the media of drawing false conclusions, Maloney falls short of exposing the issue in an informative light. Even if this incident has been blown out of proportion, it does not preclude a search for the truth—Canadian citizens should always question the actions of the military and any other political body. In this case, the success of the mission in Afghanistan is dependent upon the perception of the Afghan populace. Selective oversight should not trump detainee treatment. Also caution should be incorporated into strategic planning.

Reginald Bishop, Jr., Kingston, Ont.

IN PASSING

Arthur Schlesinger, 89, historian. A member of U.S. president Kennedy's administration, he later penned *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House*. He wrote about the careers of presidents Andrew Jackson and Franklin Delano Roosevelt, as well as on Robert Kennedy, whom he described as the "most politically creative man of his time."

Doris Anderson, 85, journalist. The editor of *Chatelaine* magazine for 20 years, she introduced social and political issues to the women's magazine. Later, she served as chair of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

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A WEEK IN THE LIFE OF BILL CLINTON

On Thursday, the former U.S. president made a splash at the Spotted Pig in Manhattan, where he dined with Bono, supermarket billionaire Ron Burkle, and rapper Jay-Z. As he left, the *New York Post* reported, the dazzled crowd chanted, "eight more years!" On Friday, speaking at Kansas State University, Clinton decried the possibility of a U.S. military strike against Iran. On Monday, he was in Selma, Ala., where he was reported to be helping his wife Hillary woo black voters.

Good news

So long, F-word

Homophobia will not be tolerated in North American political discourse. Last Tuesday, in a live radio broadcast, Quebec shock jock Louis Champagne described the Parti Quebecois as a "club of faggots," and said workers in his region of Saguenay would never vote for party leader Andre Boisclair because he is a "*tapette*" (the local slang for "faggot"). Champagne's comments drew the ire of Boisclair's political opponents, and on Tuesday, Corus Quebec, Champagne's employer, announced the radio host is suspended until an appropriate course of action is determined. Meanwhile, in Washington on Friday, the belligerent conservative pundit Ann Coulter called U.S. presidential candidate John Edwards a "faggot" in front of an audience at the Conservative Political Action Conference, offending Democrats and Republicans alike. Edwards' camp proceeded to use the slur to advantage by soliciting "Coulter Cash" donations to his campaign, and at least three major companies have pulled their ads from Coulter's website. Also on Friday, presidential candidate Hillary Rodham Clinton delivered a keynote speech to the Human Rights Campaign in which she announced her goal to repeal the "don't ask, don't tell" policy instituted during the presidency of her husband. This semantically challenged policy stated that gays and lesbians are entirely welcome in the military—as long as they don't do or say anything that might in any way be construed as gay or lesbian.

Somewhat-fair trade

Outsourcing, it turns out, can be a two way street. On Friday, the global consulting firm Deloitte reported that by 2010, international banks will spend almost one-third of their collective IT budget—which currently stands at US$44 billion—offshore. For Americans concerned about vanishing jobs, this news was not well-received. Ironically, that same week, the Indian Embassy in Washington placed advertisements in the *Wall Street Journal* seeking U.S. firms to outsource the enormous job of processing its visas, a task previously done by 40 diplomatic staffers.

FACE OF THE WEEK



AN OVER-EXAMINED LIFE: Virgie Arthur en route to the funeral of her daughter, Anna Nicole Smith, in Nassau, Bahamas, on Friday

Defensive play

News reports about the perils of childhood obesity continue to stream in. This week, for example, U.S. scientists found that overweight girls are more likely to hit puberty early. Happily, one man has taken it upon himself to do something. NBA star Shaquille O'Neal. On Monday, the Miami Heat centre announced he will star in an ABC miniseries in which he will coach overweight children. In Florida. O'Neal, a father of six, will also lobby politicians to improve school nutrition and physical education programs. We suspect they will listen.

Bad news

Kim's reign of terror

U.S. and North Korean diplomats are meeting in New York this week to discuss mending their countries' fractured relationship. On the agenda are North Korea's designation as a terrorist state, the possibility of lifting sanctions, and disabling North Korea's nuclear reactor. It all sounds very cordial, but the situation for North Koreans back home is worse than ever, according to a Human Rights Watch report. The organization has learned the government is cracking down further on citizens who try to flee—throwing them into prison camps, where they are starved and beaten. The report is a sobering reminder that North Korea is not only a threat to the world, but also to its own people.

Pass the blame

Despite a pending U.S. resolution calling on Japan to claim unambiguous responsibility for the atrocities that "comfort women" suffered during the Second World War, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe says he will not apologize. Worse still, Abe now says he doesn't believe there is sufficient evidence to prove the estimated 200,000 mostly Chinese and Korean women who were forced into sex slavery were ever coerced. This, despite the fact that the PM stands by a 1993 apology in which Japan acknowledged the existence of coercive military brothels. Abe's defiance is straining diplomatic relations abroad. More importantly, he is denying the victims long overdue justice and peace of mind.

No coincidences?

It continues to be very dangerous to be a critic of Vladimir Putin's government. A Moscow based journalist for the daily *Kommersant* died Friday in a fall from a fifth story window, after he reportedly received threats while investigating Russia's plans to sell high-tech weapons to Iran. Last week in Washington, an expert in Russian intelligence was shot in an apparent robbery in front of his home, just days after he accused Putin's government of being involved in the fatal poisoning of former KGB agent Alexander Litvinenko.

Bent out of shape

The owners of the Los Angeles Galaxy of Major League Soccer must have been cringing on Sunday when David Beckham, the 31 year old midfielder whom they signed to a US$250-million contract in January, crashed into a billboard during a Real Madrid game and limped off the field with a knee injury. Beckham's representatives say the injury won't affect his plans to decamp to L.A. this summer. Also, it shouldn't derail Victoria "Posh" Beckham's new NBC reality series chronicling the family's move across the pond, for which she received US$19.5 million. M

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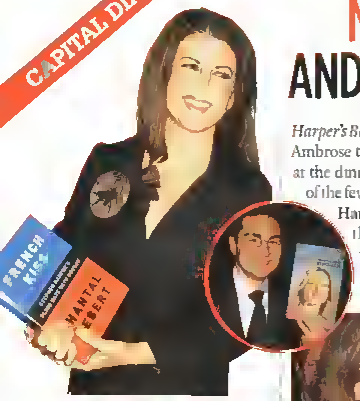
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CAPITAL DIARY

MITCHEL RAPHAEL ON THE 'BADGER' AND WHO'S CURLING UP WITH BELINDA



GALA BOOTY Rona Ambrose (above), Pierre Poilievre (inset)

WHICH COLUMNIST IS THE PM READING?

The Writers' Trust of Canada handed out its annual $15,000 Shaughnessy Cohen Prize honouring political writing excellence to Max and Monique Nemni for *Young Trudeau: Son of Quebec, Father of Canada 1919-1944* at the annual Politics and the Pen gala dinner in Ottawa. Guests in the ballroom of the Fairmont Chateau Laurier all received random books in their gift bags. Tory MP Pierre Poilievre got a copy of *National Post* columnist Don Martin's biography of Belinda Stronach. No word yet if he is a fan of the book, but he is a big fan of rap artist Eminem, his artist of choice when he works out. Jason Kenney, secretary of state for multiculturalism and Canadian identity, received a copy of Madelaine Drohan's *Making A Killing: How and Why Corporations Use Armed Force to Do Business*, which will likely be just another office dust collector. Kenney went from a very black room to a very white room as he zipped over to Politics and the Pen from a reception he hosted marking the conclusion of Black History Month and the 200th anniversary of slavery being outlawed in the British Empire via the 1807 Slave Trade Act. Tory minister Rona Ambrose received *Toronto Star* columnist Chantal Hebert's recent debut *French Kiss: Stephen Harper's Blind Date with Quebec*. Ambrose told Hebert, who was at the dinner, that she was one of the few columnists Stephen Harper reads, and asked the journalist if she would autograph her copy to give to the PM. Hebert scribbled that she hopes the PM reads it without putting brown paper over the cover, then bolted from the ballroom when *Double Exposure*'s Linda Cullen impersonated her onstage as part of a hilarious political satire act with comedian Bob Robertson, who played the *National Post*'s Andrew Coyne in a mock CBC "At Issue" panel.



JANINE KRIEBER Spanish shawl

This year, the Writer's Trust upgraded the dinner from a beef entree to venison. Chateau Laurier executive chef Collin Thornton, 33, noted there is only one upgrade left: caribou, the king of meats in Ottawa. It is only slaughtered once a year, in the fall, and then frozen. Bison would be another option but it is seen as only on par with venison.

Wearing a very low-cut, elegant black dress that night was Stephane Dion's wife, Janine Krieber, who wrapped her shoulders in a beautiful Spanish shawl. Bob Rae attended with his wife, Arlene Perly Rae. Still no "official" word that he will seek the nomination in Bill Graham's Toronto Centre riding, but he is moving there from his home in the west side of the city. Rae's uncle recently passed away and Rae will be settling into his departed relative's house soon.

PRESS GALLERY GOES NUCLEAR

The voting booths for the recent press gallery presidential elections had an Afghan-like feel with pictures of all the candidates posted. Voters saw mugs of CTV's Rosemary Thompson, the *Montreal Gazette*'s Elizabeth Thompson and the *Toronto Star*'s Richard Brennan. There was no ink for thumbprints. The pictures were there because, for years, Elizabeth Thompson and Rosemary Thompson have had their names confused with one another. At one point in their careers, both were pregnant at the same time, which added to the identity mistakes. Rosemary Thompson said if she won, she was planning to send flowers to the Prime Minister's director of communications Sandra Buckler to help heal the PMO and press gallery divide. Many media outlets are still furious over putting their names on a question list for PM press conferences, and thus boycott the process. The now infamous list is organized by the PMO, as opposed to the press gallery itself, and thus many media outlets feel it's a swindler's list that allows the PMO to pick favourites.



EXECUTIVE CHEF Collin Thornton

The new press gallery president is Brennan, who arrived about two months ago from Queen's Park in Toronto and is a clear indication the gallery is going nuclear. One MP confessed to Capital Diary that he has found the Ottawa press gallery a walk in the park compared to the tongue lashings he used to get from Brennan in Toronto, where the reporter earned the nickname "Badger." Looks like Buckler will not be getting flowers. M

PM IN SCRUM Richard Brennan (far right), press gallery president



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Three ways Dion might get his mojo back



PAUL WELLS

Stéphane Dion's current trouble, which already threatens his political career, has three causes. First, the new leader's own strategic mistakes, which are considerable. Second, chronic failure of judgment in the Liberal caucus and party apparatus. Third, the failure of memory that plagues the nation's deadline-driven, amnesiac capital. Let's take them in reverse order.

First, memory loss. Liberals seem to assume they are owed the next election, that Stephen Harper is just a bad dream who will obligingly go away at the next election, and that if he doesn't it's the fault of a hapless new leader. None of this is true. First, prime ministers who come out of opposition to win only one election are rare in our history: Joe Clark, R.B. Bennett, Alexander Mackenzie. That's it. Caretaker term-enders like John Turner and Kim Campbell are one thing. But among actual election winners, every other prime minister stuck around for a while, thanks to the extraordinary benefits of incumbency, which profit Stephen Harper today. A year ago lucid Liberals were telling me their next leader would have a hard time winning, and they didn't even know who he would be. They were right. All we are seeing today is the demonstration of that.

Second, Liberals who think badmouthing the boss will help their cause need to ask themselves how that self-indulgent whining has ever helped their party. I have here an *Ottawa Citizen* article from 1993 in which a few anonymous geniuses complain to a reporter—Jane Taber, it so happens—about that twit Jean Chrétien, who dared to call them "Nervous Nellies" in public.

"You don't build an esprit de corps by dumping on your own troops," one anonymous genius told Jane. "He should have said he had confidence in his own team or not commented at all." Note this fellow's unerring failure to take his own advice.

That same week in 1993, the Montreal *Gazette* ran an analysis by Joan Bryden that rings true today. "If Liberals hang together, rally around their leader and continue confidently with their election preparations ... the party will remain well-placed to win the election," Joan wrote. "But if they get spooked by the polls, if they begin to badmouth their leader or publicly question policy and strategy decisions, it's over." I've always thought Joan made a lot of sense.



Dion's problem is not only his inadequate grasp of spoken English. It's what he says.

So the party, or that component of it that has already written off the leader three months after it took a year to find him, needs to take a Valium. But the leader needs to pick his game up too.

Dion's problem is not only his inadequate grasp of spoken English. It is what he says. He persists in Paul Martin's strategy of turning every issue into a referendum on Conservative "values." This fails for many reasons. First, Liberals can't defend one side of a moral issue—gay marriage, drug policy, Afghanistan, private medical care—when they have often stood on both sides of it. When they try, they look hypocritical and shrill. It is hard to persuade Canadians Stephen Harper is angry and scary when the entire Liberal front bench is near apoplexy, every workday. They need to calm down and get down to the details of files, because Liberals win on competence, not virtue. They win when they defend Canadians' interests, not their souls. Speaking of interests, Ralph Goodale really needs to stop worrying about Liberal MPs' honour and start worrying about ordinary folks. In less than six months he has demanded apologies on behalf of Belinda Stronach, Navdeep Bains and himself. I'm starting to worry that if I'm not a Liberal MP, Ralph doesn't have a lot of time for me. That's a problem because it confirms the hunch that no party is more self-obsessed than the Liberal Party of Canada.

More importantly, the values referendum won't work because Harper has spent five years grabbing the political centre in important ways. For this he has been harshly criticized by influential voices on the moderate right, like Andrew Coyne. When the Liberals attack this Harper on values, they automatically position themselves on the left, forgetting that the NDP is already there and that it has never won more than 40 seats.

The Liberal party wins when it seeks to govern, not heckle. Dion himself told me six months ago that Chrétien won in 1993 by appealing to ordinary Canadians. Ordinary Canadians are probably very comfortable with Stephen Harper. They were certainly comfortable with a government that expanded free trade, ended a generation of budget deficits, cut taxes by $100 billion, tolerated private health care under Bill 11 in Alberta, sent 2,500 soldiers to Afghanistan, created the Department of Public Safety, abolished the Crow Rate, charged a right of landing fee to immigrants for seven years after the deficit was eliminated, and appealed same-sex marriage twice in court. Dion was at the cabinet table for most of those decisions. If the Liberals steer radically away from that legacy, Canadians will not let them back into power to extend it.

Oh, have you noticed I haven't said a word about the environment? Kind of a relief, isn't it. Another gentle hint to the Liberal boss. M

ON THE WEB: For more Paul Wells, visit his blog at **www.macleans.ca/inklesswells**

TOM HANSON/CP

Hijabs, kirpans—what must God think of all this?



BARBARA AMIEL

Even given his concern for sparrows, the likelihood of God being concerned with hijabs seems small. He created both Eve and her Islamic equivalent, Hawaa, naked. No hats. The Koran itself doesn't worry about head coverings, remarking only that women should be modest in appearance and sensibly adding that righteousness is the best outfit of all.

If Ottawa's Asmahan "Azzy" Mansour, age 11, wants to interpret modesty as meaning she should wear a hijab, that's her choice, though given that her Italian Canadian mother does not wear one and Azzy was 9 when she decided to don the scarf, one might be forgiven for suspecting some psychological undertones. No matter. She looks like one hell of a soccer player from the photos of her leaping in the air, foot extended, face screwed up in determination with hijab in place, legs covered by thick tights under her soccer shorts.

The Muslim referee who said no to Azzy's hijab during a tournament in Laval, Que., claimed to be following the orders of FIFA, the international governing body of soccer based in Zurich. In theory they don't approve any head coverings, though on investigation they seem more flexible. More likely the ref's decision reflected the cultural wars of Quebec, a province busily reinforcing the mantra of "*maitres chez nous*" where neither Anglos nor Muslims will tell Quebecers what to do. The various human rights commissars in Canada must be dying to come to the aid of a hijab, but after letting the entire English language and educational system be guillotined in Quebec, how can they now rescue Azzy's head?

A hijab is usually a cap with a scarf over top. The scarf is often pinned somewhere, which could scratch another player, but I wouldn't be surprised if Azzy somehow fixes hers without a pin. Sources for athletic headgear for Islamic women include Capsters, a Dutch design company, and Aheda Zanetti, whose design for a two-piece "Burqini" is now worn by Islamic women in Australia's volunteer lifeguards. The Burqini needs no pin, and does the job while being unbecoming as sin, which makes it less of a fashion statement than the hijab. The regulators of soccer, in which the head is another limb to hit the ball, may feel that two layers of material gives the hijabbed head an advantage—or a disadvantage if the material is slippery. Still, establishing hijab specifications or doing pre-game hijab searches would hardly promote good sportsmanship.

I get marginally exercised about groups in our society that feel that the larger culture should change to accommodate beliefs and choices they freely make. Or that no disadvantage should ever be attached to any choice made by them. For a long time, Orthodox Jews understood they couldn't take jobs requiring them to work on Saturdays, and evangelical Christians would not work on Sundays. Now most groups want their private choices to become public policy. The notion, for example, that you want to be a police commissioner, as Susan Eng did in 1989 Toronto, but won't swear an oath to the Queen, ought in my view to disqualify you from becoming a police commissioner. The oath was later changed.

On merits, I genuinely couldn't care less what a railway worker or RCMP officer has on his head. Or hers. As far as I'm concerned, wear a Prussian helmet with a banana tree on it. It is the spirit of entitlement that takes for granted that sports, private clubs, occupations, institutions and buildings should change their rules and accommodate them on demand that riles me. If someone wants to wear their ceremonial dagger to school, fine, but it's a matter of random discretion, not an entitlement.



JULIE OLIVER/CP

I suspect all our dress codes and dietary rules are a source of amusement to Him

What must God think of all this? Of one thing I am certain: whatever he turns out to be will bear no resemblance to the god imagined by any of the religions I know, ancient or modern, mono- or polytheistic. My belief in God is persistent and I pray. I know not to what I pray—Paul Johnson's wonderful book *The Quest for God* tells me that my prayers are to a God that hears everything, but while I want to believe that, I have great difficulty doing so.

Sitting in a gynecologist's waiting room in Manhattan, I was struck by the ostentatious davening of the ultra-Orthodox Jewish husbands. They could have done it outside or waited—and one couldn't help feeling that by praying so energetically in the faces of a small room largely peopled with Jews of a more moderate bent, they believed they were establishing their moral superiority. It reminded me of public breastfeeding, not a religious issue but an ideological one, designated by feminists in the eighties as an absolute necessity for women to do publicly when ever, whatever—in restaurants and on trains. That need came and went, proving it was, after all, only a political statement.

I suspect our dress codes, dietary rules, and other little displays are a source of never-ending amusement to God. There are few things as ridiculous as a bunch of apes trying to be spiritual. If eventually we get to meet or understand the nature of God before or after our death, I think the likelihood of his concerns overlapping those of any religion to be very small. We may make political statements with our religious garments or statements of vanity with our religiosity, but surely this vainglory will fall away. In that timeless moment, perhaps Azzy will find out that Allah really doesn't worry about her head, except that it be veiled in righteousness rather than self-righteousness. For my part, I hope to find the ability to compete with her leap—not on the soccer field but on the field of faith—a spellbinding leap she has already, so precociously, made. M

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Sinus relief at night.
Sinus relief during the day.
Have we overlooked anything?



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DO THEY HAVE MY SIZE?

The world's top designers converged in Paris for fashion week to unveil all the clothes you'll only ever see again in magazines

1 With all the stars in town it can get pretty bright up front—pop star Kylie Minogue (fifth from left) heads up this row of shaded beauties at Chloe s fall/winter show

2 Trigger-happy photogs anxiously await the start of French-born designer Gaspard Yurkievich s show

3 Mary-Kate (left) and Ashley Olsen show off what not to wear

4 Looking pretty—well vacant—in Christian Dior pink

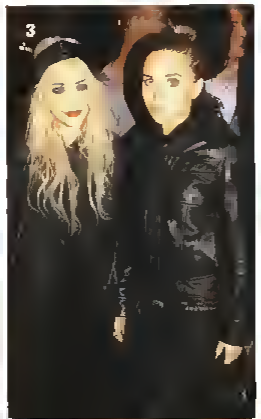
5 A model struts Italian designer Giambattista Valli s stuff

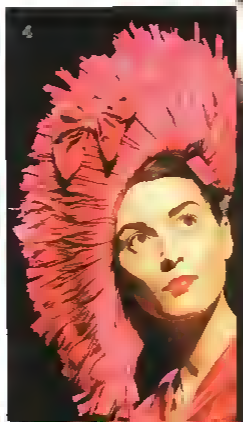
6 True to form John Galliano s show features his trademark flare

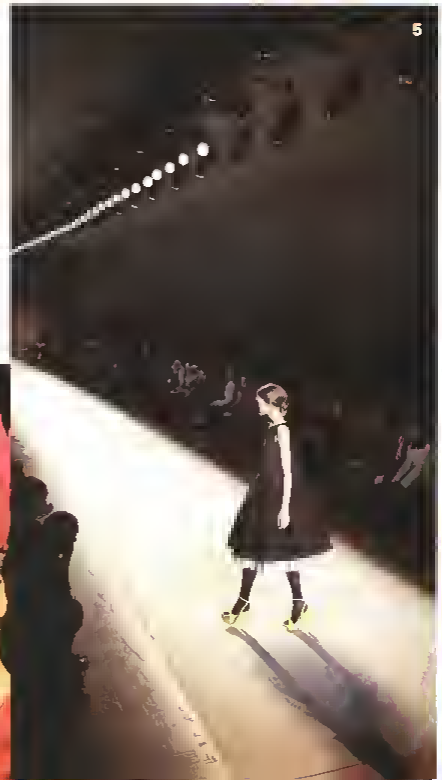
7 Hedi Slimane checks out his own collection at the Dior men s show

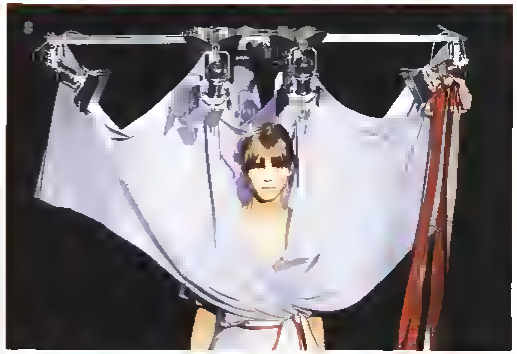
8 This creation by Dutch designers Viktor and Rolf wasn t in their ready-to-wear collection



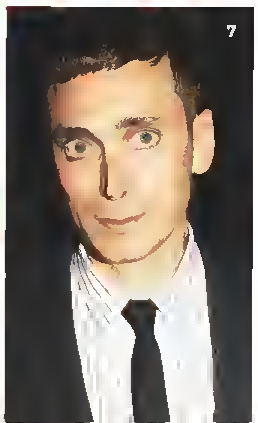












AU/REUTER // REUTERS // > CORBIS (4) CATWALKING (5) GETTY IMAGES (6) REUTERS (7) AFP/GETTY IMAGES (8)



'It's amazing how many have a family member, or know someone, who's had contact with the criminal justice system'

SUE URAHN TALKS TO KATE FILLION ABOUT HOW ONE IN EVERY 178 AMERICANS WILL SOON LIVE IN PRISON—AND GETTING 'SMART' ON CRIME

Susan Urahn is the managing director of State Policy Initiatives at the Pew Charitable Trusts in Philadelphia, which recently released the first-ever five year forecast of incarceration rates in U.S. state and federal prisons entitled Public Safety, Public Spending.

Q *Your study says that if you include people who are in prison, on probation or out on parole, one in every 32 adults in the United States is currently under correctional supervision. That makes contact with the criminal justice system sound almost normative, rather than aberrant.*

A: I don't know if it's normative, but it's certainly not unusual any more. It is amazing how many people have a family member, or know someone, who's had contact with the criminal justice system. There's been an enormous increase, and it's even more striking when you look at the black and Hispanic populations, who do, unfortunately, commit crimes at higher rates.

Q *How important is poverty? Is there a direct correlation between, say, poverty in a particular neighbourhood and the incarceration rate?*

A: There are studies showing interesting neighbourhood effects. For example, in Kansas, two counties are responsible for 40 per cent of the state's inmate population. In New Haven, Conn., a single neighbourhood is generating US$20 million in corrections costs. There are certainly concentrations, and those neighbourhoods also tend to have very high rates of welfare payments and so on. There's an inextricable combination of poverty, unemployment and other factors that intersect with crime, but there's no linear, easy explanation.

Q *Since 1970, there's been a 700 per cent increase in the prison population in the U.S. Your report explains that if current trends continue, within five years one in every 178 U.S. residents will live in prison. And that number doesn't even include people in local jails. How much is it going to cost to have that many people behind bars?*

A: We're currently spending about US$61 billion a year on incarceration, and to accommodate the additional 192,000 prisoners we're projecting by 2011 we're estimating it will cost another US$27.5 billion because new prisons will need to be constructed.

Q *All this must mean that equally huge numbers of Americans will also be working in prisons or building them or making prison uniforms or other things for convicts. Is it fair to say that crime or at least punishment is becoming central to the U.S. economy?*

A: It is an industry, there's no doubt about it, but I have no idea what percentage of the economy it is.

Q *Aside from the crime rate, what's driving the incarceration rate?*

A: Sentencing policies have a significant impact. Truth in sentencing, for instance, which means that when a person is convicted of a particular type of crime and is sentenced to a term of X length, he will in fact serve some guaranteed percentage of that time. Previously, sentences were plea bargained, or otherwise reduced, so there was not much connection between what the sentence was and the time actually served.

Q *But if these are dangerous people, they should be locked up, right?*

A: If you look at crime from a national perspective, about half of the crimes that are committed are violent, and the other half tend to be drug and property related. The explosion in incarceration is not necessarily one that can be tacked directly to an explosion in violent crime. Today, a lot of prison admissions are people who are having their parole or probation revoked, in many cases because of technical violations like not turning up for an appointment with a parole officer. In some states, though, graduated sanctions are being put in place, so a technical violation doesn't automatically result in being sent back to prison, but some kind of consequence occurs and further violations result in harsher sanctions, culminating in a return to prison. This is a more nuanced approach to criminal justice, identifying which people on parole and probation really do need intensive monitoring and supervision, which people are higher risk to reoffend.

Q *The female prison population has grown by 57 per cent in the last 11 years, compared to 34 per cent for men. Why are so many more women going to prison now?*

A: We don't have a clear idea why. It may be drug-related, particularly methamphetamine-related, because overall there has been a spike in methamphetamine-related incarceration. It's a shocking increase, but women are still a very small percentage of the prison population.

Q *The differences in imprisonment costs across the country are also pretty shocking. It costs almost US$45,000 per prisoner per year in Rhode Island versus about US$13,000 in Louisiana—why is there such a big difference?*

A: Cost figures really depend on staff wages and benefits, and the staff-to-inmate ratio. In the northeast, wages tend to be higher than in the south. And of course, if a facility is not full, it costs more per inmate.

Q *So the Rhode Island prisoner doesn't necessarily have a better cell, or more access to programs and treatment?*

A: That's right. Prison conditions vary dramatically from state to state. For example, Alabama currently has 27,000 inmates in a system that was built for 13,000, so they have significant crowding problems. A number of states are experiencing these kinds of problems.

Q *Does that mean a cell built for two now houses four?*

A: It can mean that. It can mean that there are fewer services. It is just common sense to say that when you have large numbers of inmates in cramped conditions, and not a lot of staff, it can only cause problems.

Q *But doesn't incarceration at least have some impact on the crime rate because you're getting violent criminals off the street?*

A: Most of the research shows that incarceration tends to account for about 25 per cent of the drop in crime rates [that occurred in the 1990s], so it certainly has an effect. But what we are looking at now is the law of diminishing returns. The more people you put in prison, you get gradually less and less impact on the crime rate. What states need to do is figure out who needs to be in prison to protect public safety—which is job one—how to hold offenders accountable, and how to pay attention to the fiscal bottom line and to be responsible stewards of taxpayers' funds. States are finding that there are ways to handle non-violent and low-risk offenders that don't involve incarceration. For example, community-based punishments such as day reporting, electronic monitoring, work release, having people work to pay fines and restitution—or in the case of drug offences, treatment. All these alternatives hold people accountable, protect public safety and also cost much less than incarceration.

Q *What are the rates of recidivism in community-based programs?*

A: In Illinois, they've opened the nation's first fully-dedicated drug treatment prison, and the initial data there indicate less recidivism and greater [post-release] employment compared to folks in traditional prisons. North Carolina is a good example of a state that looked very carefully at who they wanted in prison. In the mid 1980s, they were under threat of a federal takeover, and they adopted an entirely new sentencing structure that puts violent offenders in prison for longer terms, and steers lower-risk offenders toward community-based punishment. The percentage of felons sentenced to prison terms fell 47 per cent to 37 per cent, and that allowed them to make sure their prison space was available for the most serious offenders, and that the prison terms served by felony offenders more than doubled, from 16 months in 1993 to 39 months in 2005. In the 10 years since those sentencing reforms began, both the violent crime rate and the total crime rate in North Carolina have dropped. The judge who had a lot to do with these sentencing reforms has estimated that they have saved the state up to US$2 billion.

Q *Judging by network television, Americans are obsessed with crime and the criminal justice system. Do you think TV is glamorizing crime and thereby encouraging it?*

A: I have no idea. But if you look at the polling data, 10 years ago, 36 per cent of Americans said that crime was one of the top two issues the government needed to address. And in 2003, the number of people who felt that way was less than one-half of one per cent. So I think there's been a real shift in public perception about crime as a really serious issue. We did a poll in 2003 that showed 72 per cent of Americans think the criminal justice system should rehabilitate criminals, not just punish them. It may just be because so many people's lives are now touched by the system. So television aside, there's been a really fundamental shift in public opinion about the need for incarceration. That same poll showed that 75 per cent supported reducing spending on prisons and allocating those funds to public schools and community development programs.

What we see overall is that Americans want really serious criminals sent to prison, but they are very supportive of options, and rehabilitation efforts for low-level offenders. It is a case where the public is ahead of the policy makers. On average, correction spending is the fourth largest item states are struggling with, so it does mean that the more they spend on incarceration, the less they have to spend on education and health care. It's also one of the things that states have pretty much complete control over in their budgets.

Q *But isn't there a significant political danger of being perceived as soft on crime?*

A: Traditionally there's been a fear, but you can come at these problems from a very data-driven and sensible perspective, and we are seeing that more and more. Both conservatives and liberals are now talking about being smart on crime, not tough or soft on crime. Maybe the only nice thing about our projections is that they could well be wrong.

Q *But you didn't pull these numbers out of a hat. Your study is based on statistics provided by the states and the federal government.*

A: Yes. But our projections are a combination of the external factors—demographics, socio-economic and crime trends, things we don't have a lot of control over—and the internal decisions the states themselves make on sentencing, on which offences are criminalized to which degree, how they use probation and parole, whether they have effective community based punishment systems. So the states have a lot of control over whether these projections become reality. But if nothing changes, then absolutely, these numbers are very realistic. It's like the ghost of Christmas future in Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*—this is what you're looking at, but does it have to be that way? Not necessarily. M

PHOTOGRAPHS BY STEVE SIMON

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PREMIER Jean Charest's attempts at economic reform ran out of steam. Now he's staking his re-election on an infusion of federal cash.

JACQUES BOISSINOT/CP

SPARE A DIME, FRÈRE?

Quebec has massive debt, a sluggish economy and a population that loves its sleep. Now it would like another couple billion from Ottawa.

BY JASON KIRBY, MARTIN PATRIQUIN AND COLIN CAMPBELL • To those living outside Quebec's borders, the film *L'Illusion Tranquille* might seem as compelling as watching poutine congeal. In an attack on Quebec's cherished model of state intervention and separatist obsession, the hour long documentary relies on interviews with a decidedly unsexy array of academics, journalists and a panel of student government types talking about fiscal models and job seniority. Feel-good entertainment, it is not.

But the self produced documentary, released only in a handful of Quebec cinemas, has provoked a veritable *crise de conscience* in the province's media and cultural circles, simply by pointing out what is becoming increasingly obvious: Quebec is broken. Burdened with the highest taxes, the largest provincial debt and one of the oldest populations in North America, Quebec is on the road to economic ruin.

L'Illusion Tranquille suggests the Parti Quebecois' eternal pursuit of separation has served only to further distract and imperil Quebec's lot. The reaction amongst separatists was quick and predictable. "These supposedly lucid people preach our eat off trading in shallow cliches and simplistic truisms," wrote Louis Cornellier in the nationalist *Le Devoir*. More surprising, however, was how quickly and earnestly many of Cornellier's colleagues took up *L'Illusion's* cause. "This film is to Quebec's finances as Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* is to climate change," wrote Richard Martineau in the (much bigger) *Journal de Montreal*. Joanne Marcotte and Denis Julien, the film's husband and wife production team, did a positively fawning media tour. For Julien, the film's success is simple. "Our system has reached its limit," he said. "We are overly burdened, and Quebecers are starting to realize it."

Not a moment too soon. Even a cursory glance at decades of data shows Quebec is in deep, deep trouble. For years now, productivity has lagged while debt soared. It is expected to hit $127 billion by the end of next year, or almost $17,000 for every Quebecer. Provincial budgets rely heavily on federal transfer payments, and efforts to reform the economy have been shackled by powerful unions and an unwavering dedication to the province's cherished but expensive social system, wreaking havoc on public finances. As a group of academics and business leaders led by former premier Lucien Bouchard wrote in a 2005 manifesto: "In financial terms, the Quebec government is like a bulky albatross that is unable to take flight."

Things are so bad that Quebec's GDP ranks 54th out of 60 provinces and states in North America—behind many with a fraction of its population and resources. It trails Montana and Arkansas, for example, and is only slightly ahead of Mississippi. GDP is routinely 20 per cent below that of Ontario, its closest geographical and economic cousin. "In Quebec, the wealth of a family of four is $21,028 less than that of a similar family in the state of Maine," wrote Alain Dubuc in his pro-business tome, *Éloge de la Richesse* (In Praise of Wealth). "How is it that an economy such as Quebec's, which is fully capable, doesn't transform into wealth?"

Canadians will be wondering the same thing soon, as Quebec's economic crisis is about to be thrust onto the national agenda. Prime Minister Stephen Harper has hinted that the March 19 federal budget will take steps to correct the so-called "fiscal imbalance." Translation: a hefty transfer payment to Quebec, which already gets $2.2 billion a year more from the federal government than it contributes. The federal money has already become a hot political issue in advance of the Quebec provincial election, scheduled for just one week after the federal budget. When Premier Jean Charest hinted that a Parti Quebecois win on March 26 would end the federal gravy train, PQ leader André Boisclair accused him of trying to blackmail Quebecers into voting Liberal.

The trouble now is that Canada is subsidizing a province that is not only in financial trouble, but not all that interested in fixing itself, says Claude Montmarquette, an economics professor at Universite de Montreal and one of the signatories of the Bouchard manifesto. "We have a large amount of money coming from the rest of Canada and also a pass to spend a lot of money on social programs that others pay in large part for us," he says. "So why do we have to change until we hit the wall? And that's coming."

While all Canadian provinces devote increasingly large chunks of their budgets to things like health care, Quebec's social programs are far and away the costliest. Quebec has the luxury of two very expensive programs unavailable in the rest of the country. The first is the province's $5-a-day daycare program. Enacted by the Pequiste government in 1997, and bumped up to $7 a day by Charest, it is as popular as it is wildly expensive: there are some 195,000 daycare spaces, costing roughly $1.4 billion a year. The province now claims 43 per cent of Canada's regulated child care spaces, though it only has 23 per cent of the country's children under the age of 13. The daycare system is credited with helping drive Quebec's eight per cent jump in the birth rate in 2006, the first sizable increase in decades. Nevertheless, this increase comes at a price. According to La Conseil du Patronat, Quebec's main employers' federation, a child care spot in Quebec costs roughly $11,600, nearly double the Canadian average. In five years, the total cost of the daycare system has increased by 140 per cent.

Since 1994, the Quebec government has frozen university tuition at $1,668. Today, a Quebec student entering university pays on average 65 per cent less than his equivalent in Ontario. It might be a sweet deal for students, for universities, not so much. "Quebec universities are underfunded in comparison to other Canadian universities and our peers in the U.S.," McGill President Heather Munroe-Blum says. Recently, the Charest government announced a tuition increase of $100 per student per year, a move Munroe-Blum calls "extremely important." Low tuition certainly hasn't translated to more graduates. Quebec has both the lowest university attendance and the lowest degree completion rate, according to an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development study.

Since the Quiet Revolution, a mammoth civil service has become ingrained in Quebec's political culture. The number of civil servants in Quebec per capita is roughly twice that of Ontario, says Pierre-Pascal Gendron, a professor of economics at the Humber College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning in Toronto. "The public sector is quite large and it's a problem that's not going away." Polls suggest Quebecers are loath to give up the sprawling social safety net and the well-paid government jobs that have become such an integral part of the provincial system. In January, the polling firm CROP asked 1,000 people across the province about cutbacks to government services. The results showed 60 per cent of those polled want the government to continue to be a big player in Quebec society. But the system is becoming increasingly unsustainable—12 cents of each dollar raised by the Quebec government now goes to servicing the province's debt, even as spending continues to outpace revenue, according to a report last month by TD Bank.

What these gold-plated social programs all add up to is a hefty bill for other Canadians. "If you're in another province it means you're paying more to support Quebec," says Jason Clemens, director of fiscal studies at the Fraser Institute, about federal transfers. "If you go to a citizen in Saskatchewan, where they're just entering a growth phase and correcting some of their problems, they're asking, 'why should we subsidize poor policy in another province?'"

Experts say Quebec's sluggish economy and reliance on federal handouts has created a deeply dysfunctional business climate, openly hostile to competition and entrepreneurship. Consider an incident on a frigid

QUEBEC'S PUBLIC SERVANTS TAKE MORE THAN 14 SICK DAYS A YEAR—TWICE THE NATIONAL AVERAGE



ATTEMPTS to reform labour laws resulted in mass protests by Quebec's unions in 2003

RYAN REMIORZ/CP

Saturday morning in late February, when dozens of protesters clashed with police in Montreal's north end. The placard-wavers weren't there to fight homelessness and poverty, or even to oppose the war on terror. No, the activists punching the air with their fists were car salesmen. One of their own, the Pie IX Dodge Chrysler dealership, had dared to sell cars on the weekend. The move was a direct slap in the face to a 35-year-old agreement barring any new car dealer from doing business on Saturdays and Sundays in the city. A week earlier, one rival salesman had hurled a chunk of ice at Sam Hajjar, the offending dealership's manager. This time he was prepared, with police, private security personnel and muzzled guard dogs at the ready. A few customers managed to dodge the seething mob, but not before someone scratched the paint off two of Hajjar's demonstration models.

If it seems strange that car dealers, the most red-blooded capitalists of them all, would fight to *not* sell cars, consider the wealth of statistics and polls that reinforce Quebecers' aversion to the typical North American workload. When Bouchard claimed that people in the province were lazy, he was pilloried for it, and widely portrayed as a traitor, but he was simply giving voice to data from Statistics Canada that show Quebecers do work less than everyone else in the country. In a report last year, researchers found workers in Quebec put in, on average, 1,750 hours a year, or 130 less than top-ranked Alberta. And the trend is toward less work, not more. Quebec's labour productivity declined between 1997 and 2005, according to another Stats-Can study.

Part of the problem is that just 44 per cent of Quebecers hold a steady, full-time, year-round job, compared to 57 per cent in Ontario. But there's more to it than that. Quebec bosses have grown used to the fact that on any given day, a disproportionate number of their employees are going to call in sick, compared to other provinces. Full-time employees in Quebec missed an average of 13.2 days of work in 2005, according to Statistics Canada, compared with Ontario's apparently healthier workers who averaged 8.6 days off. Still, Quebecers employed in the private sector look like they're working themselves to death compared to their civil servant colleagues. A Treasury Board document that was leaked to the *Journal de Montréal* revealed the province's civil servants called in sick an average of 14.14 times in 2005, double the national average. The report stated that the Quebec government lost nearly $170 million to absenteeism. It's only getting worse. The report noted sick days have been on the rise for half a decade.

Quebecers seem to relish their downtime more than other Canadians. They watch more TV than residents in every province save New Brunswick, says Statistics Canada. And they sleep more (a poll by Leger Marketing in 2004 found Quebecers snore away for 7.3 hours a night, while Ontario alarm clocks go off after just 6.8 hours). A *Journal de Montreal* poll commissioned after Bouchard made his comments found 43 per cent disagreed with his assessment of their work habits. About the same number said they'd like to keep on working at the same pace and earning the same rate. Less than one-third had any aspiration to toil harder for better pay. In fact, if anything, eight per cent wouldn't mind working and earning even less, thank you very much.

Low worker productivity, economists note, is tied in part to labour regulations and punishing tax rates. Along with having the highest taxes, Quebec is the most unionized province in Canada—a one-two punch that has knocked the Quebec economy back on its heels. While recent budgets have aimed to reduce the tax burden and debt problems, the union grip appears unshakable. After André Boisclair became leader of the Parti Quebecois, he quipped that he wouldn't cozy up to union leaders as his predecessors, like Bernard Landry, did. But this week, with his popularity plummeting in the polls, he reached out to the union vote, accepting the endorsement of the Quebec Federation of Labour, the province's most powerful trade union. In 2003, just months after a landslide election victory, Jean Charest tried to push through some aggressive reforms, aimed in part at trimming the size of government, and limiting the power of unions. He was forced to abandon those plans following mass strikes by thousands of workers who blocked highways, disrupted transit, and closed down daycare centres. "When the public in Quebec got wind of those plans," says Gendron, the economist, "people were opposed to tax cuts, because tax cuts would mean a reduction in the size of the public sector."

QUEBEC'S PROVINCIAL DEBT IS EXPECTED TO HIT $127 BILLION NEXT YEAR—$17,000 FOR EVERY QUÉBECER





CHRISTINNE MUSCHI/REUTERS PAUL CHIASSON/CP

THE pressure is on Harper to pony up support for Quebec's beloved social programs

Foreign investors are taking notice. As it is, Quebec's share of the foreign and domestic investment flowing into Canada is below 18 per cent, according to economists, a surprisingly low figure given the province's large population and strong reputation for research and development. Last fall, CAI Global Group, a consulting firm in Montreal, surveyed the perceptions of multinational companies operating in Quebec, duplicating a study it carried out in 1994. Back then, when asked whether the province was becoming more globally competitive, 70 per cent said yes. In 2006, that figure has plummeted to just 33 per cent.

Perhaps most worrisome for Quebec is the steady stream of young people leaving the province to work elsewhere. "Quebecers are voting with their feet," says the Fraser Institute's Clemens. Between 1981 and 2005, the province was the only one to be on the losing end of net interprovincial migration every single year. Even Newfoundland, famous for exporting its young men and women to the latest economic hot spots, saw some gains in the 1980s. Quebec isn't alone in the current flood of workers fleeing the East for the booming West. But over the long run, Quebec's share of the national population has withered to 24.1 per cent in 2001 from 27.9 per cent three decades earlier.

It's not just Quebecers who have grown complacent and comfortable with the province's deep malaise. The rest of Canada has, too. All the talk of yet another big transfer has largely failed to spark the type of outrage among western Canadians that marked the past. "The concern is that as Quebec asserts its national status, we'll see further demands that the rest of the country finance its aspirations," says Roger Gibbins, head of the Canada West Foundation, a Calgary-based think tank. "But I don't think there will be a great backlash in the West because of the tremendous prosperity of the region. The animosity doesn't reach as deeply into our pocketbooks." Gibbins also notes that western Canadians take a pragmatic view of the Conservative government's actions in Quebec. Yes, it may take a dollop of federal dollars for Harper to cement his support in Quebec, but it's better than the alternative—a return to Liberal profligacy. A lot, of course, will depend on how western provinces themselves fare when Ottawa unveils its plans to rejig the federal equalization system. Greater spending autonomy in Alberta could go a long way to soothe the pain of another handout to Quebec.

While a surging economy may allay concerns for the time being, sooner or later Quebec will have to confront its spending largesse. There are some early signs that Quebecers, led by people like Bouchard and Dubuc, are beginning to take notice. Witness the recent rise of the conservative ADQ party, which is attracting the middle class suburban vote more inclined to care about the quality of its hospitals and schools than another referendum. "The population believes [the PQ] less and less," says Julien, the film producer. "We know more and more that Quebec is doing badly economically. And if we are receiving transfer payments, it certainly isn't us that is enriching the rest of Canada." Nevertheless, few expect whoever wins the upcoming election to try to re-engineer the Quebec economy, especially considering the federal government's willingness to pour money into the province. Quebec's problems are likely to remain Canada's problems for a long time to come. M

It's lonely in the city

Ed Stelmach discovers being Alberta's premier isn't as easy as it looks

BY NICHOLAS KÖHLER • At a recent Edmonton breakfast meeting with supporters, Ed Stelmach, premier of Alberta, made a startling admission: he'd gone ahead and sold his cows—a herd of Angus he'd raised through his 15 years in the provincial legislature and kept even during those gruelling months late last year when he campaigned for the leadership of the provincial Progressive Conservatives. No one could quite believe, last December, that Stelmach, never a favourite, had moved up the middle of the political field to replace the larger-than-life Ralph Klein as premier. Now, evidently, even Stelmach himself would have to come to terms with it. And so he sold his cows.

Three months into his premiership, indications are rife that Stelmach—who grew up on the same farm his Ukrainian grandparents homesteaded, and who did not speak English until he started grade school—never seriously believed he'd have to give up his cattle. Even his organizers were somewhat taken aback by his victory. Indeed, it was not until late January, when the premier's office plucked two long-time political columnists—Paul Stanway, of the *Edmonton Sun*, and Tom Olsen, of the *Calgary Herald*—from the legislature's press gallery, that he actually had a communications team. Would that they'd arrived earlier.

It is not just that Stelmach won as something of an unknown—a riddle wrapped in a hay bale stored deep in a damp barn—despite holding several ministerial portfolios under Klein. His successful leadership bid reflected a division in the party, cleaving a path between two Alberta powerhouses—Jim Dinning, the flashy favourite of Alberta's business crowd, and Ted Morton, a one-time University of Calgary professor-turned-right-wing populist. That internecine split moved Liberal leader Kevin Taft to quip: "Ed is a bit like a cowboy sitting on a horse with two heads. We don't know where that horse is going to go."

It's months later and Albertans still don't know where that horse is headed. So a lot is riding on what's said this week in Stelmach's first Throne Speech (his first budget is next month). Even if Albertans get a blueprint worthy of the province's big blue skies, the premier still must make good on it. And Stelmach has a lot of work to do, given he's been

taking heat, particularly in Calgary, for being gaffe prone, for selling face time to the highest bidder, honouring loyalty above good sense, and answering necessity with delay.

His missteps started early and began with his cabinet selections. Here the premier, whose rural northern roots appealed to a PC membership tired of dominant Calgary, chose to stick with his country backers. Of 19 ministers, only three are from Calgary, where the PCs hold 20 seats; one is from Edmonton, a Liberal stronghold; two are women; none are minorities. "I think we had more representative cabinets back in the 1920s," says Mount Royal College political scientist Keith Brownsey.

The team also lacks experience, as evident in Stelmach's next mistake—an invitation sent to members of Calgary's business community offering exclusive access to the premier for donors contributing a minimum of $5,000. Stelmach backed off the plan after the stink hit the papers, explaining he'd not been paying enough attention to fundraising efforts. But, as Duane Bratt, also of Mount Royal College, argues, "It shouldn't be up to him to stop it—there's got to be somebody in his team to say, 'Flag on the play here, boys, this is not good optics.' And he doesn't have that."

Last month, too, Stelmach learned via a journalist of an al-Qaeda offshoot's threat to Alberta's oil and gas industry. That terrorists were targeting his province as an energy supplier to the U.S. was Stelmach told the reporter, news to him—even if oil company executives had been notified days earlier. Should he have been alerted? "No, I have great confidence in the system," Stelmach later told a press conference.

But his biggest problem is managing a province on the verge of being crippled by its own success. Last month, Finance Minister Lyle Oberg unveiled a provincial surplus of $7 billion. Alberta's second highest ever (behind only last year's, at $8.7 billion). That boon was largely due to tax dollars siphoned from energy firms like Calgary-based EnCana, which posted a $6.5-billion profit in February, the best full-year performance in Canada's history. Nor must Alberta service any debt with all that dough.

As one city hall type recently put it, Stelmach lives in a town with a population equivalent to the number of migrants who move to Calgary in a typical three-day stretch. But if Stelmach's leadership is due in part to what David Taras of the University of Calgary calls "a rebellion against the cities," he "can only survive if he can actually deliver to the cities—he has to do this jiu-jitsu flip."

The Tory government's current position on the South Calgary Hospital doesn't help. Slated to begin construction this year, its projected cost is now $900 million—with a funding gap of $350 million due to ever-increasing construction costs (the province committed $550 million two years ago, then enough to cover the whole bill). Oberg, the finance minister, last month wouldn't commit to bridging the gap, citing escalating costs across Alberta. "We can't simply do a one-off and say that this project is more important." Meanwhile, Calgary-area women have suffered miscarriages in hospital waiting rooms, while others deliver babies in Montana and Toronto due to overstretched hospitals.

All this is difficult to reconcile with overflowing public coffers. Add to that the growing environmental consciousness among Albertans and Stelmach must also show that he can be green—"he's either going to get on that bandwagon or get run over by it," says Taras—and that he's not too focused on oil development, which Albertans increasingly want to see slowed. Stelmach should be worried: his rural bent won't play in the cities, where two-thirds of Albertans live. The PCs have already lost Edmonton, where 12 of 18 seats belong to Liberals. "Calgary will be the battlefield of the next election," says Bratt. Already, Calgary Conservatives, angry that Dinning lost and unsure of Stelmach, aren't delivering cash to the party as they once did.

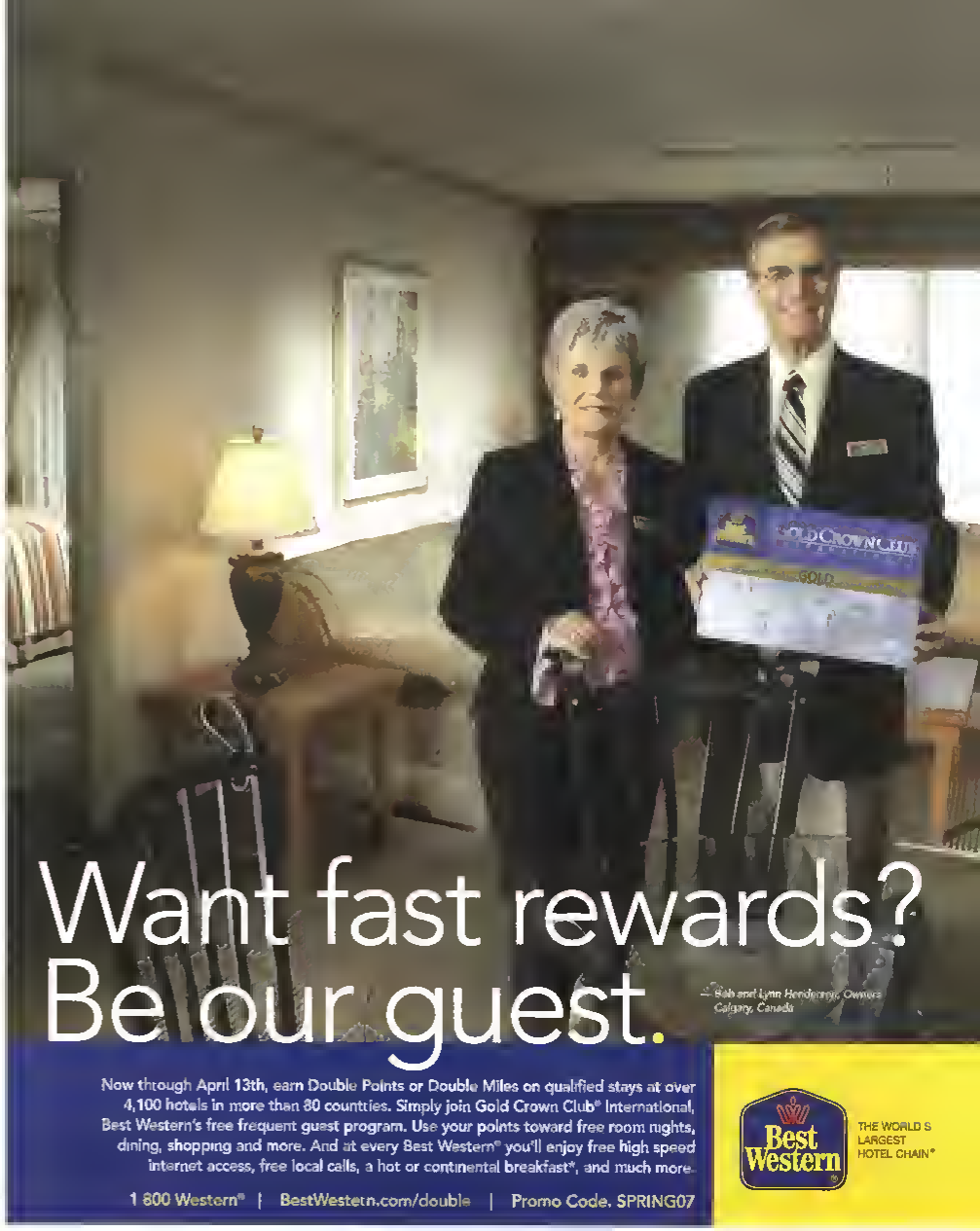
And yet Stelmach, who as a child taught himself to write with both hands while mending from a playground accident that broke his legs, remains likeable—the neighbour you'd want to have hold a set of your keys. And he has made progress. Sources with the Calgary mayor's office say they've met more with his ministers in past months than they ever did with Klein's people in 14 years. Stelmach, a smart, methodical man, is eager to learn. And he has sold his cows—the rural Alberta equivalent to Cortez burning his ships in Mexico. The loss of his herd, he told that breakfast crowd in Edmonton, saddened him. Some well-meaning person dispatched a photograph of a cow to keep him company. Perhaps someone should send Stelmach a photograph of Calgary—before he loses that too. ■

INEXPERIENCE EXTENDS FROM CABINET TO THE PREMIER'S OFFICE



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Ottawa's highly visible target



MP Navdeep Bains has to live on both sides of ethno-political divides

BY JOHN GEDDES • Back in 2005, when Liberal MP Navdeep Bains outraged many of his fellow Sikhs by voting for same sex marriage, his grandmother decided to get to the bottom of his controversial stand. Just who, she wanted to know, was this Carter fellow she kept hearing about, and why was Carter so important to her grandson that he was going to such extremes to defend him? "Carter? There's no Carter. Grandma," Bains had to explain. "I'm defending the *Charter*, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms."

It was one of the few times that straddling two worlds, the Sikh community and mainstream Canadian politics, provided Bains with a punchline. More often, nobody's laughing. There was nothing lighthearted about insider grumping after the Liberal leadership race about the way he delivered a block of Sikh delegates to Stephane Dion, a convention floor coup seen by some as old school ethnic politics at its worst. And there was no levity in Prime Minister Stephen Harper's recent bid in the House to link Bains to Sikh extremism.

Bains, 29, emerges from it all as one of the most closely watched MPs. In his signature red turban and full black beard, he's hard to miss. First elected in 2004 in suburban Toronto, he's part of a group of young Ontario MPs who form an influential club in Dion's caucus. He first made his mark by weathering a Sikh community backlash over same-sex marriage, after the courts ruled its prohibition violated the Charter, which he reveres as central to his Liberalism.

If that stand proved that Bains was no captive of his Sikh constituency, in backing Gerard Kennedy's run for Liberal leader he seemed to fall into the familiar role of ethnic power broker. But top Kennedy campaigners contend there was nothing unseemly, or unique, about the way Sikh delegates followed Bains. About 90 per cent of Kennedy's delegates did the same when he swung to Dion, they point out, including far less visible blocks like university students.

Still, the episode turned Bains into a tempting target. Any doubt about that was put to rest late last month when Harper tried to read into the House record a *Vancouver Sun* story that said Bains's father-in-law was on an RCMP list of possible witnesses for so-called investigative hearings into the 1985 Air India bombing. Harper was shouted down by Liberal MPs. But his charge came through loud and clear: protecting Bains's family was the real reason Liberals were about to vote to let the investigative-hearing power lapse, in a mandatory review of the post-9/11 Anti-Terrorism Act.

HARPER IMPLIED Bains's family was behind Liberal opposition to anti-terrorism powers

Bains denies the linkage. For the record, he says he passed an RCMP security check when he was sworn in as a privy councillor under Paul Martin. As for his father-in-law, Toronto taxi driver Darshan Singh Saini, Bains says he has never heard him talk up Sikh separatism. He says Saini co-operated fully when he was questioned by the RCMP "many moons ago," adding that so were "thousands" of other Sikhs.

Bains stresses that he just a kid back in the 1980s, when Sikh militancy was on the boil, particularly after the Indian army's 1984 assault on the Golden Temple, the holiest Sikh shrine. It was the following year that Air India Flight 182 was bombed, almost certainly by Sikh terrorists, killing 329, most of the victims Canadians.

Bains says those events didn't figure much in his typical Canadian upbringing—Saturday morning pancakes and maple syrup, after-school street hockey. But he says the Liberals and other mainstream parties should not necessarily deny membership to older Sikhs who did, back in the eighties, join groups that have since been discredited or banned for links to terror. "It was 20 years ago," he says. "There are so many what-ifs here. Was this person convicted or charged? Did you know somebody? Did you know somebody who knew somebody? I'm not there to judge."

Asked by *Maclean's* if he favours carving an independent Sikh state out of India, he says it's the first time this basic question has ever been put to him. Then he sidesteps it. "It's the politics of another country, with another people, that they have to decide about."

His core positions—that India is far away and the most heated days in Canadian Sikh politics are long past—are undeniably true. But that won't satisfy critics, silence Tories, or make him a typical MP. Before politics, he earned an M.B.A. and worked as a financial analyst for Nike and Ford. Dion has made him his trade critic, and Bains says he wishes he was occasionally asked about his policy file. But he mentions that as a fond, faint hope, sounding resigned to the unlikelihood of such an uncontroversial topic being raised with him anytime soon. M

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THE SAME site that posted Mercer s 'big fat gay wedding' now praises his 'bitch-slap'

FIGHTING WORDS

Rick Mercer's riposte to a St. John's professor sets off Internet threats

BY BARBARA RIGHTON • Comedian Rick Mercer makes a living with his rants. But his attack on Memorial University English professor Noreen Golfman, printed in the St John's *Independent* last month and sent ricocheting around the Web, was a doozy. Mercer took the weekly paper's regular columnist to task for a piece she wrote about soft media coverage of the conflict in Afghanistan. Whether they read her column or not, hundreds of bloggers responded to Mercer by calling Golfman "an idiot," a "bitch" and a "femi-Nazi." There have been threats on her safety. "Just don't be surprised if she ends up getting the s-t kicked out of her on one of those St. John's back streets," warns one.

Mercer, by contrast, is being hailed as a hero in the unlikeliest of places. Freedomnion, a Canadian site that calls itself "the voice of principled conservatism," once posted a story headlined "Rick Mercer's big fat gay wedding." Now it has a posting praising him for his "bitch-slap."

The ruckus started on Jan. 12, when Golfman wrote a Life section column for the paper. It began, "Between mouthfuls of fruitcake and blissful stretches of catch-up sleep, you couldn't ignore the war in Afghanistan during the holiday season if you tried." Golfman blamed all the "cranked up sentimentality" on news sources like the CBC. But what she did to inflame Mercer was dismiss Master Cpl. Paul Franklin, the medic who lost both legs to a suicide bomber in Kandahar over a year ago. Without naming Franklin, she wrote, "If it wasn't a story about some poor sod's legs being blown off, then it was an extended interview with some dead soldier's parent."

Then she took a shot at Mercer, whom she called a "sacred cow," and "that whole lot of stat Newfoundlanders," including Mary Walsh, who spent their Christmas 2006 holidays with the troops in Afghanistan. Mercer, born near St. John's, gets the *Independent* at home in Toronto. He had just been named an honorary colonel of a maritime helicopter squadron for his support of the forces. He is a pal of Franklin's. He went ballistic.

According to *Independent* editor Ryan Cleary, Mercer sent him an email telling him to expect his letter to the editor. "I couldn't believe it when I read what Rick had to write," Cleary says. "He went right after her." At 1,500 words, Mercer's letter was 1,200 words too long. "It's too big," Cleary told him. Mercer insisted that the letter run word for word, complete with a picture of Master Cpl. Franklin. Cleary complied by running it on the front page of his Life section, bordered in black. "I said, 'How can I lose here?' And besides, he didn't charge me."

Under the headline "Fighting words," Mercer called Golfman "another bitter baby-boom academic." Adopting a patronizing tone, Mercer defended Canada's role in Afghanistan, and cautioned Golfman. "Rest assured the Taliban would frown on your attending this year's opening night gala of the St. John's International Women's Film Festival. In fact, as a woman, a professor, a writer and (one supposes) an advocate of the concept that women are people, they would probably want to kill you three or four times over."

The Taliban, maybe. But Canadians? Golfman, who wrote a follow-up piece trying to clarify her original point, was astonished at the vitriol—and the threats—Mercer's words unleashed, particularly from Alberta, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. "A torrent of emails," she says, "poured in for more than two weeks after Rick's letter was posted on the Net." She was so frightened, she alerted campus security and—after taking one phone call from a man who told her he was looking for Franklin's legs, did she have them?—had an assistant screen her calls. "It was so obscene," she says, "I collapsed at my desk." Mercer regrets that part. In a telephone interview, he talked about the motivation for his letter, but refused to go on the record because he didn't want to fan the flames any further. In an email he sent *Maclean's* later, Mercer added, "I hate to pay attention to the crackpot element. They are always there and simply thrive on this type of attention."

THE TALIBAN, MERCER WROTE, 'WOULD PROBABLY WANT TO KILL YOU THREE OR FOUR TIMES OVER'

But the crackpot element is having a field day, regardless of Mercer's spent fury. As for Golfman, she'll go on writing her column in spite of "being swamped by this wave of ignorance—from Canadians." Still, she feels skittish. And she still won't answer her phone. M

FOR THE RECORD

WHEN INTELLIGENCE FAILED TO LEAD TO ACTION

"We were onto them. We just couldn't translate that through an intelligence-collection program into pre-emption or prevention or doing something that could lock the conspiracy. Those are the worst kinds of intelligence failures: when you see the possibilities of success and you just can't get there."—At the Air India inquiry this week, Wesley Wark, a national security expert, spoke on how before the 1985 bombing, CSIS came close to nailing the plot.

CP, DAY O MCCORD

No seismic shifts yet for B.C. schools

BY KEN MACQUEEN • The neighbourhood school should be a source of pride and symbol of stability. Unfortunately, in dozens of communities in seismically unstable British Columbia, schools are also a source of worry. A government audit found that 311 of 864 schools in earthquake-prone areas of the province are at high risk of severe damage in a moderate to strong earthquake. Hundreds more are vulnerable to lesser damage.

Two years ago, Gordon Campbell's Liberal government made an election promise to correct years of inaction with a $1.5 billion program to upgrade 700 substandard schools within 15 years. Some of the most fragile schools would be repaired by 2008, said Tom Christensen, then education minister. "We're fast-tracking seismic projects at 80 high priority schools so that students will be protected as soon as possible."

Since then, there's been little evidence of urgency, accomplishment or even a coherent plan, says Tracy Monk, a Vancouver family doctor and a founding director of Families for School Seismic Safety. So far, ministry figures show just four schools have been upgraded and construction continues on seven others. Another 48 haven't progressed beyond feasibility studies. No work has started on any of the 16 Vancouver schools at high risk—including a school attended by one of Monk's children. Seattle, in the same earthquake zone, will have completed a US$31-billion safety upgrade of all schools by 2010.



IF THE BIG one hits, school's out in B.C.

B.C.'s current Education Minister Shirley Bond has said the work is proceeding as quickly as possible. Monk says the 15 year commitment seems a "hollow" exercise in wishful thinking.

The province has already upgraded bridges, tunnels and prisons. The legislature in Victoria is also scheduled for seismic repairs. Monk calls it unacceptable that prisons have a higher priority than schools. Her organization is trying to press the issue with government, without unduly raising the fears of parents and children. The government is gambling a major quake won't happen soon, she says. "How much more Russian roulette are we willing to play?" M

Finally a cure for 'family-time famine'



FEDS give public transit a $1.5-billion boost

BY AARON WHERRY • Those wondering how the still-abstract concept of environmental policy will be packaged for the average Canadian family would have been well advised to note the rhetoric coming out of an aircraft hangar in suburban Toronto this week. There, Prime Minister Stephen Harper was promising $1.5 billion for enviro-friendly public transit and Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty was framing the funding as a boost to traditional family values.

"Most of all, I think that this is a great day for hard-working Ontario families," McGuinty said. "It means that somewhere in the GTA, a dad who's worked a long day is going to get home in time to sit down to dinner with his kids, in time to help out with homework, in time to simply enjoy time with his loved ones."

This is the new spin. Forget the distant doomsday scenarios and focus on the family. If the prospect of dire consequences for your great-grandchildren isn't enough, maybe you'll be moved by the immediate enticement of a happier, healthier home life.

McGuinty is not the first to suggest a direct link between combatting climate change and preserving family values. Witness Green party leader Elizabeth May musing recently that income-splitting for families might allow one spouse to work from home and subsequently drive less—cutting down on smog and helping little Timmy with his book report at the same time. Assuming the family hobby doesn't include aerosol cans or burning coal, every minute spent around the home is a minute you and yours are not screwing up the environment.

"This is about helping families caught up in a just-in-time world," McGuinty explained to reporters after Harper's announcement, "who are suffering from family time famine." M

Thief hits bump on road to recovery

BY MICHAEL FRISCOLANTI • It was one of those rare news stories, the kind that makes you think that maybe, just maybe, the world isn't doomed after all. According to police in Sault Ste. Marie, Ont., Jonathan Lock "turned himself in" last month—three years after stealing a couple cases of Labatt's Blue from a downtown Beer Store. Good for him, right? The guilt became too much to bear, so he did the noble thing and confessed to his crime.

Well, not exactly. Even Lock admits the whole thing was overblown. "It is a twist on the truth," he says. The real version, he explains, sounds more like this: in July 2004, after a night of heavy drinking, Lock stumbled to a nearby Beer Store to pick up some more ale. The place was closed, but a burgling employee forgot to lock the front door. So Lock walked in and helped himself. "I was severely intoxicated when I did it," he says now. "I don't even drink Labatt's Blue, so when I woke up with two cases of Blue I wondered where the heck it came from. I had to call a friend and he filled me in. I said 'Uh oh.'"

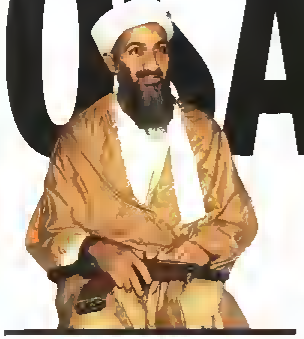


AN UNLOCKED door led to drunken heist

Back then, Lock was no angel. "I have a criminal record as long as my arm," he says. Drunk driving. Armed robbery. You name it. But over the past couple of years, the 30-year-old has worked hard to sober up and land a steady job. Last month, however, his old life momentarily caught up with the present when two men stormed his apartment and assaulted him and his partner. "I have a lot of victims in my past, too," Lock says. "So now, for the first time, I know what it feels like." But that wasn't the end of his ordeal. A week after telling police his side of the home invasion, an officer phoned him with the news: *your face matched an old surveillance video*. "They said if they didn't see me in the next couple of days, there would be warrants issued," he says. "So I went up right away."

When he arrived, police charged him with breaking and entering, a court date has been set for April 2. "It's embarrassing," Lock says. "But I don't feel sorry for myself at all. It's what I deserve. I've cleaned up my act in a lot of ways, but it doesn't matter. A lot of stuff can still come back and hit you years later." M

HAPPY 50TH, OSAMA



More than five years since 9/11, bin Laden, at mid-life, terrorizes us still

BY MICHAEL PETROU

It is unlikely that Osama bin Laden will celebrate his 50th birthday this Saturday in a particularly raucous fashion. Music is probably out, as he once declared it to be "the flute of the devil." There definitely won't be any dancing. Good food is also unlikely. Bin Laden, when he enjoyed millions of dollars to spend as he wished, shunned the comfort even of drinking chilled water. The Prophet Muhammad enjoyed no such luxuries, he reasoned, and besides, the more one gets used to modern extravagances, the more difficult it becomes to leave it all behind to pursue jihad in the mountains.

The last major celebration bin Laden attended was the January 2001 wedding of his son, which took place in Afghanistan in a movie theatre on the outskirts of Kandahar that the then ruling Taliban had conveniently shut down. Bin Laden served his guests meat, rice and tomato juice. He also treated them to a poem praising the Islamic militants who had attacked the USS Cole. But some guests found the spread a little on the chintzy side, and his stepfather noticed something larval wriggling in his water glass.

On top of all this, Muslim fundamentalists usually don't acknowledge birthdays, and many Saudi men bin Laden's age can only roughly guess when they were born. Still, even if bin Laden dismisses birthdays as a decadent Western construct, he surely can't help but notice the relentless greying of his beard. Mid-life crises afflict more than just infidels, and bin Laden, wherever he is this week, might take some time out to reflect on what he's accomplished in his life so far.

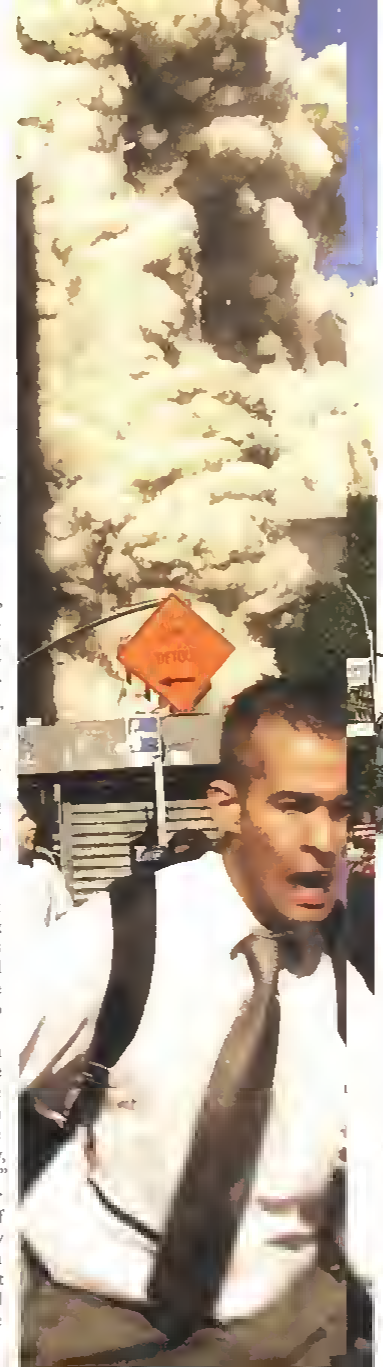
The truth is, the terrorist leader has much to celebrate. With the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, he sowed fear throughout the West and forced the institution of new security measures that have—perhaps irreversibly—disrupted daily life. Instability grips the Middle East as never before, his greatest enemy, the United States, is bogged down along with its partners in messy conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq—all of that is thanks, in large part, to bin Laden and al-Qaeda, the terrorist organization he founded. Its role in Afghanistan and Iraq appears to be increasing, even as al-Qaeda enjoys a resurgence—contrary to the misguided belief that it was mortally wounded in the U.S.-led war on terror that followed 9/11. The American population, meanwhile, confronting a steady stream of body bags arriving back home, is losing the will to fight. Four years ago, U.S. President George W. Bush talked about transforming and democratizing the Middle East. Now many Americans want to abandon the whole region.

That may have been al-Qaeda's long-term plan all along, according to a report by the Stratfor group, a private global intelligence firm. Bin Laden has always held a less than flattering view of the U.S. military's resolve. He said as much during one 1997 interview, commenting on the "low spiritual morale" Islamist fighters had observed among American troops during the U.S. military's brief and tragic engagement in Somalia in the early 1990s. As for the U.S.-led attacks on Afghanistan and then Iraq? "We can conclude that America is a superpower, with enormous military strength and vast economic power," he said in February 2003. "But all this is built on foundations of straw. So it is possible to target those foundations—then the whole edifice will totter and sway." Among the latgets is U.S. morale, which, when weakened with the help of a compliant media, will speed the eventual U.S. withdrawal.

In al-Qaeda's battle plans, that would be only the beginning. In a July 2005 letter allegedly sent by Egyptian-born jihadi Ayman al-Zawahiri, bin Laden's No. 2, to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, then the head of al-Qaeda in Iraq, Zawahiri drew a four-stage strategy for the Middle East. First, ensure that the Americans are expelled from Iraq. Second, put in place an Islamist government. Third, use that as a springboard to launch jihad against Iraq's secular neighbours. And fourth, provoke a violent confrontation with Israel.

In short, a regional conflagration.

And in the interim, keep on plotting against the West. Last week, U.S. spy czar Michael McConnell said that al-Qaeda continues to plan attacks against the United States with the aim of inflicting mass casualties, and remains the biggest threat to American interests. Al-Qaeda is back—if it ever went away.



CP, SUZANNE PLUNKETT/CP







BORN OUT OF the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, al-Qaeda has struck the World Trade Center, the USS Cole and the London tube

ALAN DEJEAN/CORBIS; US NAVY/CP; ALISDAIR MACDONALD/REX FEATURES

Bin Laden's status among Islamic radicals soared with every new attack

OSAMA BIN LADEN was born in Riyadh, the son of Mohammed bin Laden, a Yemeni construction magnate and the patriarch of what is thought to be the wealthiest non-royal family in Saudi Arabia. Most accounts place Osama as his father's 17th son. But as Mohammed fathered some 55 children, it is difficult to know for sure.

Mohammed bin Laden led a devout life, but his children were spoiled. In 1970 and 1971, Osama and his older brother Salem visited the Swedish town of Falun. The two teenagers illegally parked their enormous Rolls-Royce outside the inn and happily paid the hourly fines because they thought it was fun to go to the police station. They wore expensive Christian Dior and Yves St. Laurent shirts, and after they had worn them once they gave them to their hotel cleaner.

For a time, Osama enjoyed elements of Western culture. But he experienced a religious awakening and became an intensely pious teenager. His devotion to Islam wasn't chest-thumping political grandstanding; he was quiet and studious and sought to persuade others by example. He stopped wearing shorts for soccer, and played in long pants. And although Osama later decided that music was diabolical, he organized an a cappella singing group that composed odes to jihad. Back then, Osama conceived of jihad as an internal struggle, not holy war.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 changed all that. The occupation of an Islamic country by atheist Communists inflamed bin Laden's passions, as it did those of Muslims around the world. Volunteers poured into Pakistan to join the holy war against the Soviets. Bin Laden and the Palestinian cleric Abdullah Azzam founded the Services Office in 1984, which funded and organized Arab volunteers fighting inside Afghanistan. The young bin Laden achieved much fame as a cash cow for Islamic warriors. But he wanted to confront the Soviet infidels himself. Bin Laden established a base in Afghanistan for several dozen Arab volunteers under his command. His men were brave but incompetent. Their contribution to the eventual victory of the Afghan mujahedeen was insignificant. In their eyes, however, their faith had defeated an empire.

It was during this time that bin Laden met Zawahiri. With a small band of Arabs, they founded al-Qaeda, meaning "the base," to support jihads against insufficiently Islamic regimes. The U.S., while not an initial target, became one when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in 1990 and the Saudi royal family called on U.S. troops for protection. Bin Laden had offered to field an army of Arab veterans of Afghanistan to defend Saudi Arabia, but was spurned by the royal family. The shame was too much.

Some al-Qaeda members were dismayed at the prospect of holy war against the American superpower. Still, al-Qaeda graduates bombed the World Trade Center in 1993, and three years later—now living under the protection of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan—bin Laden formally declared war on the U.S. and Israel. Al-Qaeda launched a series of attacks against U.S. targets over the next five years, including the bombings of embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, and the attack on the USS Cole. Bin Laden's stature among radical Islamists soared. His greatest ambition, however, was realized on Sept. 11, 2001, when al-Qaeda hijacked four planes and flew three of them into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, murdering 2,973 people.

Bin Laden and his followers were in an Afghan mountain hideout when they got news of the first attack. His companions cheered, but the al-Qaeda chief urged them to wait and held up two fingers. When the second plane hit, bin Laden himself wept and prayed. He held up three fingers, there was more to come. When a third plane plowed into the Pentagon, he held four fingers aloft. But the passengers on United Airlines Flight 93 overwhelmed their hijackers, crashing the plane before it could reach its target.

Still, bin Laden had surpassed his own hopes. He had slaughtered thousands of Americans on their soil—a gift from God. It was also his biggest mistake. "Bin Laden's idea was to lure the U.S. into Afghanistan and get us to repeat the same mistake the Soviets had made," says Lawrence Wright, author of *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11*. "He had no idea that within six weeks U.S. and coalition forces would sweep away the Taliban and pummel al-Qaeda."

The U.S. did not invade Afghanistan with large numbers of troops, as bin Laden had hoped. Instead, America and its allies launched air strikes and deployed special forces who teamed up with Afghans in the Northern Alli-

ance to overthrow the Taliban. Bin Laden and a few of his top comrades escaped into Pakistan, but much of the al-Qaeda leadership was destroyed. "The survivors were scattered and destitute and unable to communicate with each other," Wright says. "This was a movement that was essentially broken."

IT IS COMFORTING to believe that al-Qaeda never really recovered from its defeats in 2001. Many analysts suggest that it has since morphed into a "franchise." Freelance terrorists can "self-induct" themselves into al-Qaeda by declaring that they are members and attacking the West, the theory holds, but there is no longer an organized network. Even George W. Bush seems to have bought into this version. "Absolutely, we're winning," he said in October. "Al-Qaeda is on the run."

This might have been true in the months after 9/11, but no longer.

Consider the case of Mohammed Sidique Khan. He was one of the four British Muslims who blew themselves up in the July 7, 2005, London bombings, murdering 52. Initial reports described Khan and his co-conspirators as "homegrown" terrorists with no links to al-Qaeda or foreign jihadis.

We now know that both Khan and fellow bomber Shehzad Tanweer visited Pakistan before the attacks. Al-Qaeda's propaganda unit, as-Sahab, later released "martyrdom" videos of both men in which they justify the impending slaughter. And Ayman al-Zawahiri claims the two attended an al-Qaeda training camp and insisted on becoming suicide bombers.

The July 7 bombings were not an exception. Several plots disrupted by British, American and Pakistani authorities in the last few years—including this past summer's alleged plot to blow up 10 transatlantic airliners—all led investigators to cells and camps in Pakistan or eastern Afghanistan. This alarming development calls into question some of our most fundamental assumptions about al-Qaeda's capabilities and intentions, given that the movement seems undeterred from the same grand homicidal ambitions it demonstrated on 9/11," wrote Bruce Hoffman, a professor at Georgetown University, in recent testimony submitted to the House armed services subcommittee on terrorism, unconventional threats and capabilities. And in an interview with *Maclean's*, Hoffman called the notion that there is no longer a functional al-Qaeda leadership "wishful thinking."



Experts still consider al-Qaeda to be the greatest threat to U.S. interests



AYMAN al-Zawahiri, bin Laden's No. 2, anti-U.S. protesters in Pakistan, and Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who was al-Qaeda's man in Iraq

According to some experts, al-Qaeda's main base is in Waziristan, a mountainous and lawless region of northwestern Pakistan, in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas that border Afghanistan. Here, it and other terrorist groups have reportedly found a refuge where they can operate with virtual impunity. "Everyone is there," says Ahmed Rashid, the author of several books about militant Islam in Central Asia and one of the world's foremost authorities on the Taliban. "There are Afghan and Pakistani Taliban. There are Kashmiris, Central Asians, Chechens, al-Qaeda, various allies of the Taliban. It's a real mix of all the major terrorist groups around the world."

The Waziri safe haven exists in part because Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf is unwilling to decisively confront the tribal forces in the area, electing instead to sign a series of "peace deals." "These have essentially been negotiated with the Taliban," Rashid says. "The army does not want to fight in Waziristan. To placate the army, he's done these deals, which are a cover for really trying to withdraw the army from these areas and not engage the extremists."

Others believe al-Qaeda's global headquarters are elsewhere. Stratfor speculates that it is located in Pakistan's North West Frontier Province. In order to operate in the modern world, the thinking goes, al-Qaeda needs to have access to sophisticated communications equipment and infrastructure, available in the more developed NWFP and not in the wild tribal areas.

Whatever the theories, there is no doubt that cross-border attacks on Western troops in Afghanistan greatly increased after the Waziristan deals. Now, Rashid says, typical al-Qaeda tactics—such as suicide bombings, are becoming prevalent in Afghanistan—evidence of al-Qaeda's growing presence in the country and its co-operation with the Taliban. Stratfor, in fact, reports that, since 2005, al-Qaeda support for the Taliban has increased dramatically, the result of a meeting between Taliban leader Mullah Mohammed Omar and al-Qaeda leaders, during which Omar expressed his displeasure over al-Qaeda's neglect of the Afghanistan struggle.

The reason for that neglect was al-Qaeda's second major theatre of operations: Iraq.

The U.S.-led invasion liberated millions of Iraqis from the tyranny of Saddam Hussein, but it was also a gift for al-Qaeda. Here was an opportunity to rally Islamist opinion to its cause and to directly confront tens of thousands of American troops on the ground in a Muslim nation. "Iraq looks a lot like what bin Laden had in mind for us in Afghanistan," Lawrence Wright says.

The Jordanian Abu Musab al-Zarqawi moved into Iraq shortly before the war began with his al-Tawhid terrorist group. Zarqawi had established a training camp in western Afghanistan in 1999. Al-Tawhid and al-Qaeda had some contact with each other at the time, but were independent. This changed in October 2004. Zarqawi changed the name of his organization to "al-Qaeda in Iraq" and pledged allegiance to bin Laden. "By God, O sheik of the mujahedeen, if you bid us plunge into the ocean, we would follow you," Bin Laden welcomed Zarqawi into al-Qaeda in an audiotape that aired two months later.

The partnership deepened, despite ideological differences. Zarqawi advocated attacks on Shia Muslims, whom he considered apostates, as a means of igniting a civil war within Islam in which Sunni Muslims would triumph. Bin Laden disagreed. In his July 2005 letter, Zawahiri chided Zarqawi for both his attacks on fellow Muslims and for his habit of beheading hostages on television. "You shouldn't be deceived by the praise of some of the zealous young men and their description of you as the sheik of the slaughterers," he said. "We are in a battle, and more than half of this battle is taking place in the battlefield of the media."

Al-Qaeda nevertheless flourished in Iraq, and by the time of Zarqawi's death in June 2006, the terrorist group was well entrenched among Iraqi insurgents.

Mohammed Hafez, a visiting professor at the University of Missouri at Kansas City, has researched suicide bombers in Iraq. Of 101 identified suicide bombers (including three women) who blew themselves up between March 2003 and February 2006, 44 were from Saudi Arabia. Eight came from Italy, and only seven were Iraqis. Hafez says that many of these suicide bombers had connections with international terrorist networks, including al-Qaeda. "So it's not just purely angry individuals shocked by images from Iraq," he told *Maclean's*.

Al-Qaeda is enjoying a resurgence elsewhere in the world as well. A secret report by MI5, Britain's domestic intelligence service, warns that the group has a foothold in virtually every Muslim country in North Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia.

The ultimate prize for al-Qaeda, however, remains targets in the West, and here, too, it may be poised for success. The same MI5 document, seen by the *Sunday Telegraph*, warns that the United Kingdom is now facing a greater threat from homegrown al-Qaeda agents than at any time since Sept. 11, 2001. Dame Eliza Manningham-Buller, the head of MI5, made a rare public appearance last November to warn that the spy agency knew of 30 terrorist plots aimed at Britain, and that it was keeping 1,600 people under surveillance. "These plots often have links back to al-Qaeda in Pakistan, and through those links al-Qaeda gives guidance and training to its largely British foot soldiers here on an extensive and growing scale," she said.

It is unclear what role Osama bin Laden has in these operations. There has been a lot of speculation that he may have died. Last fall, a report in a French newspaper, based on a French intelligence service document citing Saudi sources, said bin Laden had succumbed to typhoid fever in August. A Taliban official promptly stepped forward to say bin Laden was alive and well. And as recently as last week, another Taliban leader, Mullah Dadullah Akhund, said bin Laden has been in regular contact with Taliban leaders.

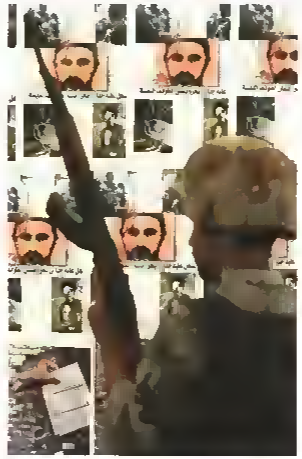
The terrorist leader certainly looked well-groomed in his last video appearance in October 2004, making it unlikely that he is holed up in the damp and unhealthy confines of a cave. Most experts believe he remains alive. But there is also little doubt, as U.S. intelligence officials have been quoted as saying, that Zawahiri is actively guiding al-Qaeda operatives, while bin Laden himself appears to have little direct involvement.

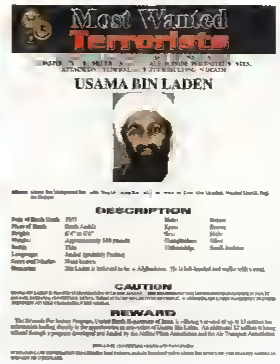
This raises the question of whether it will matter if bin Laden's life is cut short before he has the chance to celebrate his 51st birthday a year from now.

American efforts to find bin Laden have yielded few clues. The U.S. missed its best chance during an assault on his stronghold in the Tora Bora mountains in December 2001. Since then, American officials have said his trail has gone "stone cold." Eventually, however, the al-Qaeda leader will make a mistake, or someone will turn him in for the US$25-million bounty on his head.

"I think this would be damaging to al-Qaeda, because bin Laden is a very significant person,

AN IRAQI soldier at a checkpoint in Baghdad checks out pictures of Zarqawi, bin Laden, shown in his 'Most Wanted Terrorists' poster released by the FBI in October 2001, has a US$25-million bounty on his head, although the U.S. has declared his trail 'stone cold'





The world's most wanted man was once a shy heir to his family business

a rallying symbol," says Angel Rabasa, a senior policy analyst at the Rand Corp. who recently co-authored a study on global jihadist groups. "But he would not end it. The movement has taken on a life of its own, independent of the personalities involved in creating al-Qaeda."

Osama bin Laden weighed in on the implications of his death in a video that aired on Dec. 27, 2001. He had just escaped from Tora Bora and might have been injured. He then appeared frail and old. "I am just a poor slave of God," bin Laden said. "If I live or die, the war will continue." M

THE ISSUE IN...

SWITZERLAND: GO AHEAD, PICK ON THE LITTLE GUY

The alpine nation's army was on the march last week, and accidentally invaded neighbouring Liechtenstein. One night, 170 infantry troops blundered almost two kilometres into the tiny principality before realizing their error and scampering back. A spokesman for Liechtenstein dismissed the incursion. "It's not like they stormed over here with attack helicopters or something." The Swiss warriors carried assault rifles but no ammunition.

CP/ KHALID TANVEER/CP; BALKIS PRESS/CP; HADI MIZBAN/CP; ALEX WONG/GETTY

CLOGGED ARTERY

Higher costs and new irritants lead to calls for a Canadian border czar

BY LUIZA CH. SAVAGE • In the five years since the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, corked up the Canada-U.S. border there have been agreements about "smart" and "fast" borders, and a summit in the Yucatan where the leaders of Mexico, the U.S. and Canada stood before the Mayan pyramids and promised to balance "security" along with "prosperity." Yet at the same time, the U.S. Congress has decided to build a fence along the Mexican border, and the Canadian border has become a breeding ground for new rules and regulations, from a looming passport requirement to inspections of truckers' lunch meats. Where once U.S. agencies would plan and test new border measures, "now there seems to be a race on to see how many programs we can get out there," complains David Bradley, the CEO of the Canadian Trucking Alliance, whose members face more than a dozen new hurdles since 2001.

The people who make their livings crossing the border say it's time for Ottawa to overhaul the way it deals with Washington. Unexpected measures pop up from a variety of U.S. government agencies, and it's often unclear who in Canada is responsible for beating them back. The minister of public safety and emergency preparedness, Stockwell Day, deals with Michael Chertoff, the head of the powerful Department of Homeland Security. But some new regulations fall to other departments with fewer Washington contacts and less entrée with security-obsessed U.S. lawmakers and bureaucrats.

For example, Canadian industry is livid about an obscure new agriculture inspection fee of US$5.25 that will hit all border crossing businesses—from airlines to automakers—to the tune of $75 million. The U.S. Animal Plant Health Inspection Service fee was to take effect in November but has been delayed until June for trucks and railcars, although some truckers have already prepaid the fee for 2007. Business groups predict that this new and little noticed bit of red tape will undermine the work and money that has gone into speeding up border crossings. "This comes totally from left field, and it goes to the corner with [the department of] Agriculture duking it out—but it has a huge impact on the cost of air travel and other cross-border travel," says the head of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, Nancy Hughes Anthony.

Other similar red tape issues have been dispersed across departments such as Transportation or Industry, leaving businesses scrambling to figure out who is in charge. "We are not structured to react quickly enough to all the various measures. It's a very difficult process to get several departments and several ministers to focus on one of our issues," says Bradley.



EIGHT MINISTERS, including Stockwell Day (right), have some say on border issues

There are currently eight cabinet ministers with responsibility for some part of the border. Bradley says that's seven too many. He wants Ottawa to create a "border czar," whose full-time job would be making the border work, not just for public safety but for the four-fifths of Canada's exports that head to the U.S. and account for 52 per cent of Canada's GDP. "This issue is so important that it requires a person with a grasp of all the issues to come up with a strategy," he says. "Clearly, you can't displace all those ministers, but you can isolate an issue." Someone in cabinet needs to conceptualize the border as a "process"—part of the North American supply chain that needs to flow smoothly, he said. Otherwise, any inefficiency at the border has to be made up for elsewhere by industry—by squeezing costs or speeding up production.

Hughes Anthony says Canada needs to stop playing defence. "We have to have an overall vision and a coordinated plan on the Canadian side to push the kind of border we want, to advance constructive ideas about mutually readable technology and the maximum co-operation. We need someone who is going to be proactive," she says. One challenge is that Homeland Security, the U.S. agency that calls the shots on border issues, is focused on security and not facilitation of trade. "Whether it's an agency or a coordinating mechanism, we have to create a Canadian front that is as big and powerful as the DHS," says Hughes Anthony.

Bradley says Day is doing a fine job in his role, but points out that Stephen Harper's predecessors moved more toward centralization. Under the Martin government, Anne McLellan held Day's portfolio but was also deputy prime minister, giving the job more clout. She also chaired a cabinet committee relating to border issues. Bradley says he'd like to see the Harper government go even further. But McLellan told *Maclean's* that she doubted a border czar could solve the problem. "All governments are challenged with how they deal with horizontal issues that cut across departments. There is a certain degree of turf protection, a desire to keep information to yourself and so on, but I think things like that cabinet committee help," she said.



DON MACARTHUR/CP, DAVE CHIDLEY/CP

A spokeswoman for Day, Melissa Leclerc, said there is adequate coordination regarding the border. "There is no formal, official, specifically dedicated cabinet meeting, but minister Day, when needed, has many forums to talk to his cabinet colleagues." She added that her office hears frequent suggestions for including other things in the department's powers—from domestic airport security, currently under Transport Canada, to the security certificate process now shared with Immigration. "Where do you draw the line?" she said. M

A new high-tech military for China



CHINA is adding some serious muscle

BY NANCY MACDONALD • Unease over China's growing military might deepened last Sunday when Beijing announced the largest spike in military spending in five years, two months after successfully testing its first anti-satellite missile. Of the 15 per cent increase, the largest portion will go toward manpower expenses, increasing the professionalization of the 2.3-million-strong People's Liberation Army, and making the military competitive with the civilian sector for top talents, says James Mulvenon, of the Washington-based Center for Intelligence Research and Analysis. But a significant portion of the US$45 billion budget will be spent on modernization, says Chen Li, a China scholar with the Brookings Institution, until Beijing began reforming its massive military in the mid-1990s, it was considered a low-quality, rather primitive fighting force.

The slated technological upgrades in missile systems, electronic warfare and other high-tech items, will mostly be domestically generated, according to Wade Huntley of the Liu Institute for Global Issues at the University of British Columbia. Military-related sales to China have been severely restricted by the U.S. since the Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989, but while Beijing has often relied on Russia for advanced weaponry like cruise missiles and jet fighters, improvements in China's defence sector have enabled it to begin producing an "astonishing" range of advanced weapons systems, says Mulvenon. While China remains 25 to 30 years behind U.S. military capabilities, the old cliché about a backward, outdated Chinese defence industry is no longer accurate.

China has always wanted to be seen as a great nation. Already, it has emerged as a powerhouse in the new global economy. Now Beijing wants to increase its standing in the global military rankings, too—to the consternation of others. M

CP, REUTERS/GETTY

Something rotten in Denmark?

BY PEETER KOPVILLEM • Pity the Danes. Late in 2005, the residents of this normally quiet and peaceable country began to find themselves the object of the Islamic world's ire after one of their newspapers printed 12 cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad. Now, the capital, Copenhagen, has experienced some of the worst rioting ever seen in this small nation of 5.5 million. At issue was the fate of the Ungdomshuset, or Youth House, a notorious squat that had been occupied by left-wing activists since the 1980s. After the local government sold the building in 2000, it was bought the following year by Faderhuset, a Christian congregation that went to court to have the squatters evicted. When the building's occupants refused to leave, a police anti-terror squad raided the premises to evict them—and the troubles began.

There was one peaceful demonstration, when 1,000 protesters bicycled to City Hall to show their support for the youth centre. But that was overshadowed by the running battles between police and youthful rioters who, over three nights, tore up cobblestones to throw at authorities, and torched dozens of cars and a school. (At some point, someone painted Copenhagen's famed but much-abused statue of the Little Mermaid pink.) Damage was estimated at $3 million, close to 700 people were arrested. "They are completely out of line with what we can accept," said Lord Mayor Ritt Bjerregaard. "Violence isn't a viable means in a society like ours."



COPENHAGEN gets torched. 700 arrested

Among those arrested were foreign nationals from Germany and Sweden—the Ungdomshuset had became a left-wing *cause célèbre*. Formerly known as the Folkets Hus (the People's House), it had witnessed milestones: the decision to establish International Women's Day was made there. But the protests were for naught. On Monday, as activists watched, the building was torn down. M

The Defense Department's new sheriff

BY LUIZA CH. SAVAGE • If he is trying to signal that a new sheriff is in town, U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates is off to a good start. While Donald Rumsfeld was loath to admit failures until he himself was fired in November, Gates was quick to oust top army brass in the wake of a scandal over mouldy walls and mismanagement at the crown jewel of the military medical system, Walter Reed hospital in Washington.

A series of *Washington Post* exposés late last month described wounded soldiers left to languish for months in dilapidated out-patient rooms where ceilings leaked, rats abounded, and bureaucracy threw up obstacles to receiving adequate care. In the wake of the reports, fix-it crews arrived immediately with cans of fresh paint, but that wasn't enough for the military to cover up the political mess.



EVEN Democrats are prelsing Gates

At first, the army's reaction sounded like a replay of the response to the prisoner abuse scandal at Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison: blame the low-ranking soldiers. The secretary of the army, Francis Harvey, blamed the problems on "some" non-commissioned officers. But rather than push accountability down the chain of command, Gates pushed up. First he fired the commander of Walter Reed, Maj.-Gen. George Weightman. And when Harvey temporarily gave Weightman's job to Lt.-Gen. Kevin Kiley, who had previously ignored warnings about poor conditions, Gates removed him, too. Then, complaining about "defensiveness" in the top ranks, Gates also fired Harvey. "The problems at Walter Reed appear to be problems of leadership," Gates said.

This week, Congress began hearings to investigate whether similar problems exist elsewhere in the nationwide system that cares for wounded veterans, including those returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. And so far, Gates's handling of the problem is drawing some bipartisan praise. Said Dianne Feinstein, a Democratic senator from California, "Secretary Gates is a breath of fresh air. He's taken action. And not only low-level people, but high-level people have been replaced."

Now if only he could fix Iraq. M





A NEW report calls for a dramatic restructuring of Canada's economy. More technology, higher education spending and lower taxes

IN PURSUIT OF PROSPERITY

Canada's economy is falling perilously behind the U.S. Here's how to fix it.

BY PETER SHAWN TAYLOR

PROSPERITY REPORT

David Jones has seen the future of his business. In fact, he's having it installed right now. It doesn't involve plastics, flying cars, underwater hotels, or wiki-anything. The future looks a lot like half a city bus with a computer screen hanging off the back.

Jones is co-owner of J. Gerth Custom Tooling, a small metal stamping and fabricating firm based in Waterloo, Ont. In an industry dominated by decades-old technology, a low-skilled workforce, declining margins and apparently unstoppable offshore competition, he's decided to embrace the future with a brand-new Italian-made Platino CP3500 laser cutter. It's his $500,000 leap of faith.

"Sure, this has been a huge decision," says Jones, standing in front of his half-assembled meal-ticket of the future. "But it's also a no-brainer. If we didn't get this machine, I wouldn't have a business in five years."

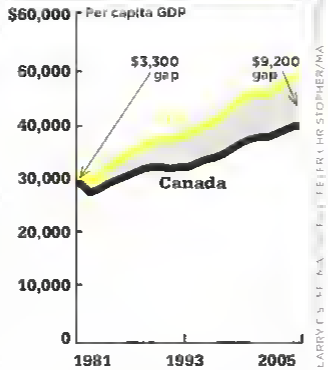
Surrounded by pallets of barbecue frames that make up one of his core contracts, Jones reflects on how his new computerized laser cutter will change forever the way he does business. "Right now, before I can turn out something like these barbecue parts, my customers have to spend $70,000 and six or seven weeks building a tool to run it. Or, they could have a tool made in China for $20,000 if they can wait three months." These large upfront costs mean that most contracts are not economical unless Jones's customers order several hundred thousand identical parts.

Once his laser cutter is operational, however, Jones will have a whole new perspective on efficiency. "When this is up and running, we'll be able to do any sized order at any time," he boasts. "If someone came in and said they wanted a prototype, I could give it to them in 24 hours. That opens up entirely new markets for us." And for this new work, he'll be able to charge higher prices. Jones also figures he will be partly insulated from Chinese competition since his turnaround time has been cut to mere hours.

If there is a worry, it's that this new technology-heavy piece of equipment will radically change his labour needs. "Now we'll need workers who can understand computers to operate this thing. And we have a permanent requirement for an engineer, where in the past we outsourced a lot of that work." Still, the upside far outweighs any looming HR downsides. "If this makes as much sense as I think it does, in a couple of years we'll have five or six of these machines," he grins.

In fact, there may be a much bigger upside to Jones's new machinery than just the fate of his own small business. The instincts and implications of his fancy laser cutter might well represent the future of the entire Canadian economy, at least according to Roger Martin, chairman of the Ontario-based Institute for Competitiveness & Prosperity. Martin is advocating that Canada completely restructure how it learns, works, taxes, spends and invests, in order to create a far more productive and technologically-advanced economy. His objective is to catch up to the standards of productivity and wealth set by the United States. Martin calculates that closing the gap with the Americans would provide Canadian households an extra $12,000 a year, on average, to spend as they wish by 2020. Ignore this challenge, Martin warns, and the result will be a slow but steady drift toward economic irrelevance.

Canada's prosperity gap has widened dramatically



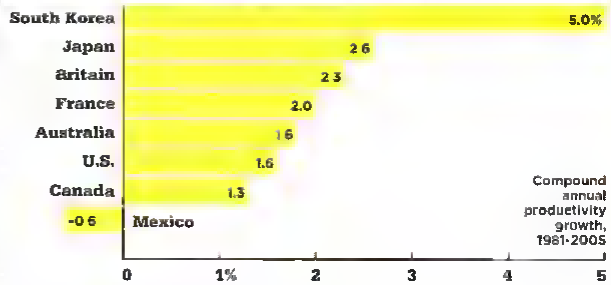
LARRY FISHER/MASTERFILE

MARTIN, WHO IS WELL KNOWN as the dean of the Rotman School of Management at the University of Toronto, has made a personal crusade out of hectoring Canadian businesses, politicians and workers to pay more attention to national productivity issues and the ever-widening gap in prosperity between Canada and the U.S. The "Agenda for Canada's Prosperity," which Martin released this week at conferences in Ottawa and Toronto, is his latest and most ambitious plan for closing the gap in GDP per capita between the two countries—a chasm that has swollen from $3,300 a person in 1981 (all figures expressed as 2005 Canadian dollars) to an ominous $9,200 a person currently.

The trend of Canada's economic performance relative to our neighbour is not good, and according to Martin, if this negative momentum is not arrested, Canada will end up on the sidelines as the U.S. slowly increases its dominance and wealth. "We can all agree that Canada is a fabulous place to live," he says. "But I'm not convinced our position is as stable as people like to believe. The U.S. can afford a lot more education, health care, investment and scientific research than we can, and that has consequences. The existence of such a big gap over the long run is very dangerous to our economy."

But convincing Canadians of that fact is an uphill battle. A new poll, conducted for *Maclean's* by Innovative Research Group, shows 72 per cent of respondents are satisfied with their standard of living as it is. And just 12 per cent consider closing the prosperity gap to be a high priority. Many Canadians rightly feel that this country does well in comparison to most others. Among nations with more than 10 million population, Canada is No. 2 in terms of per capita GDP. But Martin maintains the fact we lag so far behind the U.S. is the only comparison that matters given our history, proximity and closely knit economies. "I haven't seen anything in our research that suggests Canadians fundamentally don't want to be No. 1," says James Milway, executive director of the Institute for Competitiveness & Prosperity and lead researcher on the "Agenda for Canada's Prosperity" project.

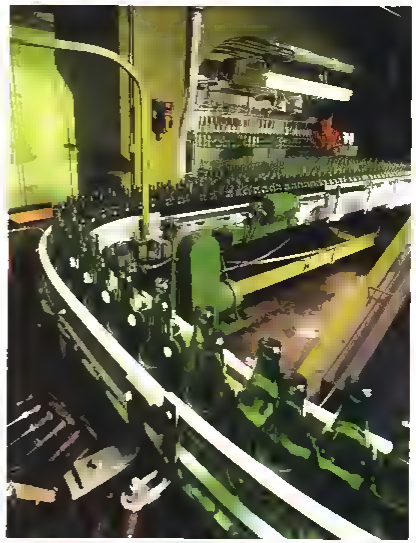
Canada's productivity growth is lagging our rivals



Of course Canadians have heard warnings of the Canada-U.S. productivity gap before and responded with a collective yawn. But there may be a dawning sense that something needs to be done. According to the new *Maclean's* poll, 45 per cent of Canadians do not believe the next generation will be able to afford a better standard of living than ours. Just 26 per cent think our living standard will continue to get better.

Martin promises that he is not going away. And the example of David Jones gives him some encouragement that his message may finally be getting through. "What he is doing is exactly right," says Martin of Jones. "And his motivations are very important to understand. He is driven by equal parts of fear and opportunity. Fear of competition and the opportunity of new markets. This is the reality Canadians have to wake up to." Complacency, says Martin, is the enemy.

American companies spent $8,000 per worker on machinery in 2005, while Canadian firms spent just $5,700



LLOYD SUTTON/MASTERFILE

MORE automation means higher productivity and wealth

In order to make their productivity medicine more attractive, Martin and Milway have calculated the benefits of cutting the prosperity gap back down to its 1981 level of $3,300. The increased economic activity spurred by his prescription of lower taxes, a better educated and more flexible workforce would boost both personal income and taxes for all levels of government. According to their research, this would mean an extra $11,900 annually in disposable income for every Canadian household *plus* another $108 billion in government revenues to be spent on other priorities, such as health care or the environment. "Productivity is not the easiest sell," admits Martin. "But an extra $12,000 to spend however you like—every

year? That hits you with a wham!"

Indeed, polling numbers suggest Martin is right. Asked if they thought closing the prosperity gap is a "critical problem" in need of immediate action, only 12 per cent of Canadians agreed. But tell them that it could mean another $12,000 in their pocket each year, and the number calling for dramatic change jumps to 24 per cent.

Martin figures if politicians and the business community got to work immediately on the problem, the reward could be at hand in 13 years. But that will require a significant restructuring of the Canadian economy in terms of attitudes, institutions and policies.

The first objective for Martin and Milway's "Agenda for Canada's Prosperity" calls for a dramatic reduction in business taxes. The report even blue-skies the idea that corporate income tax could be eliminated entirely with a net benefit to investment, wages and prices. It's a notion that is sure to spur debate.

"This isn't about getting the rich out of paying taxes," says Milway. "We tax businesses at higher rates than almost any other country in the world." He advocates a tax regime that specifically encourages owners to invest in their businesses. He cites research from the federal Department of Finance that suggests a tax cut on capital cost allowances, which permit firms to write off investments quicker, provides more than 10 times the benefit to the economy than cuts in consumption taxes such as the GST. "Cutting the GST may be good politics, but it's bad policy because it will not improve our productivity," says Milway.

NEWER technology will require a more educated and better trained workforce





Since 1993, education spending in the U.S. has risen by 3.3 per cent a year, compared to 0.2 per cent in Canada

is to address what they see as competitive lethargy among business leaders. Access to the latest equipment and technology is what boosts productivity among workers. In 2005, U.S. businesses invested an average of $8,000 per worker in all forms of machinery, equipment and software. Canadian firms invested just $5,700. "Our businesses are not investing enough in machinery and that is why we are not as competitive," says Milway. "Investing in equipment is not just about efficiency. It creates more value."

Simply demanding that businesses shell out more for equipment is unlikely to spur the economy into action. To improve corporate motivation for this sort of risk-taking, the

One of the more puzzling obstacles on the path to higher productivity is the Canadian labour market. On some measures Canadians actually outperform the U.S. economy—our demographic profile is more advantageous and we boast higher labour force participation. However, there is a significant difference in the level of work intensity between Canada and the U.S.—Americans work longer and harder than we do, and this explains a large part of why they produce more per capita.

Canadian employees work fewer hours, have more part-time jobs and take more vacations than their American cousins. We also have fewer workaholics—those putting in 50 hours or more per week. If Canadians simply prefer to spend more time at leisure than Americans do, then Martin admits it would be foolish to try to change the national culture. However, this is not entirely the case. His research shows that nearly a third of Canadian part-timers would prefer full-time work but cannot find it. This frustration rate among part-time workers is almost twice as high in Canada as compared to the U.S.

In addition to a massive business investment in technology, Martin also proposes that individuals and governments embrace education, particularly post-secondary and skills training, in order to improve the quality of the Canadian work force. "We need to increase both the supply and demand of highly educated people in our economy." Of the $9,200 per capita gap, Milway calculates that $1,800 of it is due to lower educational achievement in Canada. "We need to get our workforce better educated," he says.

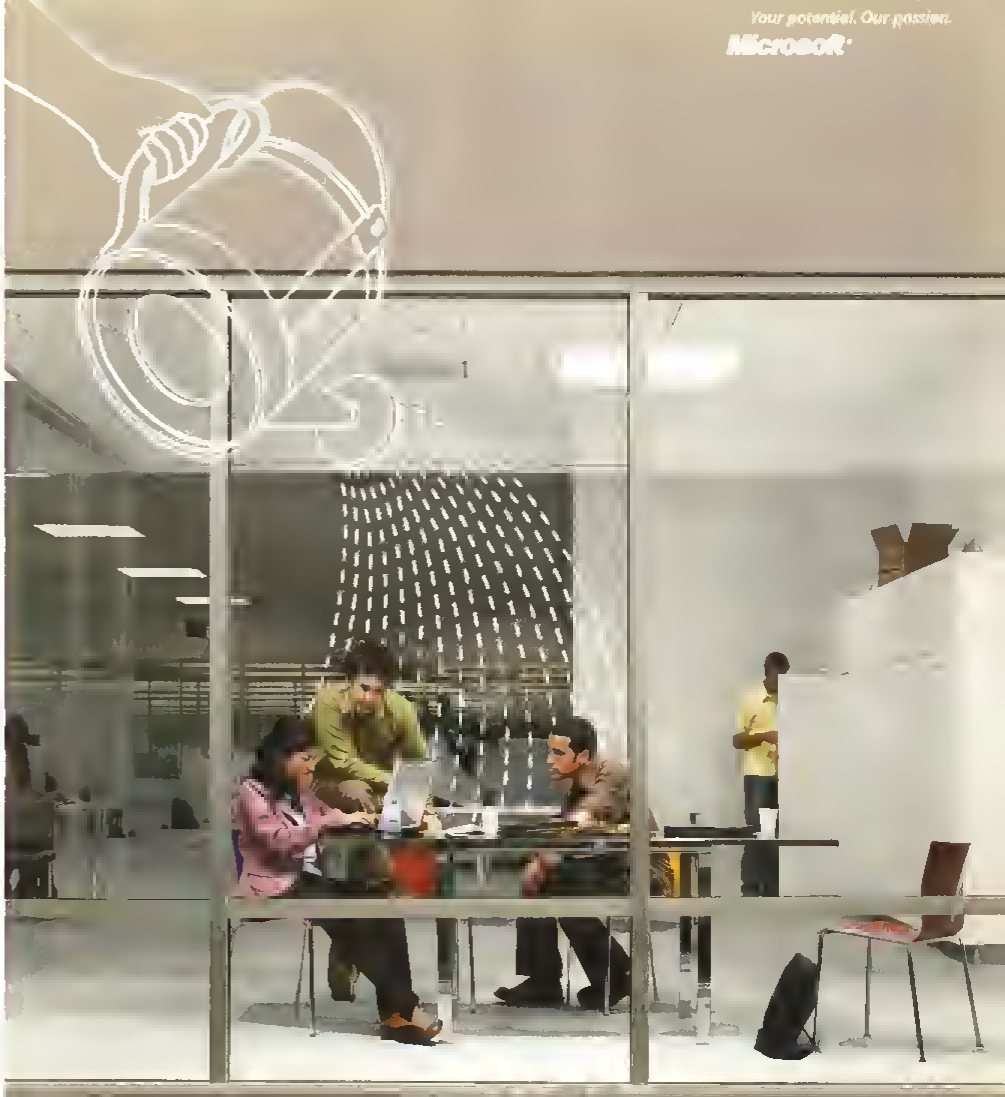
Martin characterizes the current dominance of health care in Canadian government budgets as symptomatic of a national preference for consumption in the present over investment for the future. While Canadian and U.S. levels of health care spending by governments are remarkably similar ($2,900 per capita in Canada versus $3,000 per capita in the U.S.), American governments outspend us on education by a wide margin. In fact, since 1993 the U.S. has delivered a 3.3 per cent annual growth rate in public spending on education while ours has plodded along at a mere 0.2 per cent—a situation that bodes poorly for the prosperity gap.

The report also calls for a dramatic increase in the level of competition faced by all Canadian businesses. For instance, federal ownership regulations protect various sectors such as telecommunications and banking from legitimate overseas competitors. And despite our era of globalization, there are still many impediments to free trade in sectors ranging from food processing to biopharmaceuticals. Internal barriers even limit free trade between provinces. This sheltering from competition inevitably results in less innovation among Canadian firms and higher prices for customers. "Every time Canada has been exposed to international competition and free trade, we have done well," argues Milway, outlining the massive benefits that flowed to Canada in the aftermath of the Free Trade Agreement with the U.S. and NAFTA. As a small country, Canada will benefit from access to larger markets and more customers, he declares. "We have to start believing in ourselves."

To facilitate all this new investment and competition advocated in the "Agenda for Canada's Prosperity," the authors promote

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we see
a place where ideas can grow.

Microsoft Canada is committed to supporting initiatives that cultivate innovation and have a positive impact on the local software economy. In continuation of this pursuit, Microsoft and Infusion Angels have launched Canada's first entrepreneur-focused Innovation Centre in Waterloo, ON. Microsoft Innovation Centres foster the ideas and growth of entrepreneurs, students and inventors. Find out more at microsoft.ca/potential

the idea of increased business education. The notion of a business school dean arguing for more M.B.A.s may seem self serving, but the authors defend their analysis on the basis that Canada out-produces the U.S. in science and engineering graduates per capita but lags significantly behind in business degrees. "Just putting in new machinery is not enough, you need a workforce that can rise to the challenge," says Milway. "And the facts show that our business managers are not as well educated, and less sophisticated than their competitors in the U.S."

Through lower business taxes, greater competition across the entire economy, more investment in technology by businesses and more investment in education by individuals and governments, the study proposes a dramatic realignment of Canada's economy. And yet, not everyone is convinced that either the goal or the reward is worth the effort.

Neil Brooks is a professor of tax law at Osgoode Hall Law School in Toronto and the author of a recent report published by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives comparing 19 industrialized nations on a variety of social and economic indicators. "Aiming for U.S. per capita GDP appears to be totally misguided," he says. "On nearly every indicator we looked at, the Americans were at or near the bottom. They have the highest rates of poverty, the greatest degree of insecurity and inequality. Their health outcomes, on average, are the worst. So are their education outcomes. They may have more obscenely rich people than we do, but that doesn't make the typical family any better off."

As for the notion that we could all become wealthier if we accepted Martin's challenge, Brooks asks: why bother? "I can't imagine why anyone would want to work as hard as the Americans," opines Brooks, an ardent supporter of taxation and public spending. "At the end of the day we should be concerned about whether we are enjoying life and leisure. Working harder to get an extra $12,000 a year isn't going to make anyone any happier or more satisfied with their life."

For Martin, however, the quest to close the gap with the U.S. is about aspiring to something higher—seeking out future success rather than accepting current satisfaction. "I think it is unbecoming of Canada not to achieve our full potential," he declares. "Yes, we are a great country now, but there would be so much more possibility for greatness if people paid attention to this issue." M

The Innovative Research Group surveyed 3,286 Canadians from its online Canada 20/20 panel between March 1 and March 4, 2007. The survey has a national margin of error of +/– 1.71 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

The cost of a life of leisure

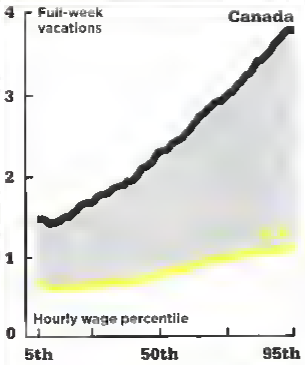
Canadians sacrifice wealth and prosperity for more time spent away from the office

BY JOHN INTINI

PROSPERITY REPORT

Brian Scudamore, president of 1-800-GOT-JUNK?, didn't flinch at the thought of spending $319,000 this year to give employees at his company's Vancouver headquarters two extra weeks of paid vacation. Now, everybody who has worked there for more than a year gets five weeks off. "It was something we couldn't afford not to do," says Scudamore, who requires that his employees take at least two of the five weeks back to back. "People come back recharged, focused and with better ideas. We're even considering boosting it from five to six weeks." Scudamore, who turns 37 next week, hopes to be taking 14 weeks off by the time he's 40.

The vacation gap widens as income increases...



While Canada's king of the junk heap is an extreme case, experts say that the propensity of Canadians to take vacations has further widened the prosperity gap between Canada and the U.S. We work more than most Europeans, but Canadians are on the job 157 fewer hours than Americans every year, according to the Institute for Competitiveness & Prosperity. That's a full month's worth—of which 45 per cent is blamed on full weeks off (the fact that Canadians work fewer hours than Americans when they're on the job accounts for the rest). The average working Canadian takes 3.9 weeks off each year compared to two weeks for a typical American. And the more money and education you have in Canada, the more time you spend away from work. Meanwhile, "the rich guys in the States keep working and keep making more money," says James Milway, ICAP's executive director. "In the U.S., if you're highly skilled there's a bigger benefit to working than in Canada."

Time off is therefore much costlier for Americans. Paid vacation is less common and unions—which have reduced the number of work weeks and increased job security in Canada—are much weaker south of the border. U.S. productivity is driven largely by fear, as many Americans worry that a week or two at the beach could cost them their jobs.

While that doesn't sound like an ideal way to live, it's an essential part of the strength of the U.S. economy and a big reason why Americans have more money to spend, on average, than Canadians. And yet, a large majority of Canadians, according to a poll conducted for *Maclean's* by Innovative Research Group, aren't willing to sacrifice their vacation time (72 per cent say "no"), or work longer hours (65 per cent) in an effort to close the gap.

But blaming vacation, says Walid Hejazi, a professor at the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management, ignores other important factors that contribute to quality of life: well-being and happiness. Hejazi says that the U.S. workforce is generally less happy than ours. And an unhappy workforce, he says, has higher turnover, which can also have a serious, negative impact on productivity.

Critics, however, claim that vacations are a drag on the bottom line for a few reasons: employees are less productive leading up to their time off, vacations disrupt the work of co-workers who have to cover extra responsibilities, and, even when an employee returns, it takes time to get back to full speed.

Hejazi says it's important to remember that productivity isn't just about working more hours. "It's about getting people to work more effectively," he says. "Canadians lag the Americans in hours worked, but we're also less effective when we do work."

At least we're well rested. M





CANADIAN houses are about 22 per cent smaller than American homes on average

Smaller homes cheaper cars

Signs of the wealth gap are all around us, but Canadians just don't care that much

BY JOHN INTINI

PROSPERITY REPORT

You can tell a lot about a person by the type of car he drives. The same, evidently, holds true when judging a country's economic strength. More than 70,000 new Honda Civics rolled off Canadian car lots in 2006—making the Japanese compact our top seller by a large margin. Meanwhile, the Toyota Camry—with more legroom and a heftier price tag—was the hottest seller south of the border. The average price of a car sold in the U.S. is about 20 per cent higher. That's roughly the standard of living difference between the countries," says Don Drummond, Toronto Dominion Bank's chief economist.

Canadians live in smaller homes, too (the average new single-detached house in the U.S. is 2,434 sq. feet; in Canada, it's closer to 2,000 sq. feet), and have less purchasing power. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Canada's standard of living, measured in terms of GDP per capita, is about one fifth below the U.S., and experts pin much of the blame on Canada's poor productivity. According to data compiled by the Toronto-based Institute for Competitiveness & Prosperity, the average Canadian worker in 1981 was producing 87 per cent of what the average American worker did. Today our output is at only 79 per cent. And based on productivity estimates for 2006, Canada is at risk of falling even further behind.

Turning things around is made more difficult by the fact that the average Canadian has a hard time seeing the importance of narrowing the productivity gap—especially when most other economic indicators look good. In fact, according to a new poll conducted for *Maclean's* by Innovative Research Group, only 19 per cent of Canadians think Americans have a better standard of living than us, and 53 per cent don't think the Canada-U.S. gap makes much difference in their lives. "It just doesn't resonate," says Drummond. "Canadians instinctively think that we're saying we should embrace everything about the American way of life."

That's not what experts are recommending at all. Increased productivity, they say, leads to more disposable income. "Productivity doesn't dictate a certain shape to your society—it gives you choice," says Drummond. "Americans are spending their brains out—but that's a choice. Weak productivity doesn't give you any choices."

Drummond's hope: American levels of income and the Canadian way of life. "There's no reason we can't have both," he says. "But it requires a change in government policy, at the federal and provincial levels. And a lot falls on the private sector."

One of the biggest differences between the two economies comes down to capital. Canada invests far less than the U.S. does in machinery and equipment—especially in the information technologies sector. "That industry is virtually non-existent in Canada," says Drummond. "And yet, that sector makes up almost five per cent of the American economy. We also make very few computers in Canada, which is a major industry in the U.S."

We're not yet, but experts warn that if our productivity continues to lag, we'll start looking south with envy. "We can see the cars they drive and lives they live and I don't think we'll like being so obviously less wealthy," says James Milway, executive director of the Institute for Competitiveness & Prosperity. "People are going to start saying, 'The only way I can afford that vacation is if I work 40 hour weeks instead of 35'."

Milway also thinks that a little friendly competition with our neighbours can only help. "It would be fun," he says, "if more people were asking 'How do we get more new products to market then they do? Why can't we be the innovative nation? Why is Canada always so middle of the pack?'" The answer to that question is about a lot more than having a nicer car. M

Drummond's dream: American levels of income, and a Canadian way of life. 'There's no reason we can't have both.'



MAN'S BEST FRIEND IS ALSO SMARTER AT STUDIES

Fostoria, Ohio, city officials have accused police chief John McGuire of falsification and tampering with records. McGuire has a questionable degree in criminal justice from an online college based in the Caribbean, so does his police dog, Rocko. Listed on his diploma as John I. Rocko, the dog somehow completed courses such as how the U.S. court system works. Rocko nailed an A+ grade in that subject, while McGuire pulled down a mere B-

DAVID ZALUBOWSKI/AP

The straw makes all the difference

BY AMY ROSEN • Milk may never be the same. A new invention, already part of McDonald's restaurants' push into healthier menu items elsewhere, is set to hit store shelves in Canada within the next few months.

Lisa Kable, a spokeswoman for Unistraw International Pty. Ltd., says the Sipahh milk flavouring straw will arrive in 90 countries, including Canada, by late 2007. The single-use straws add flavour to plain milk as it's sipped through flavour beads made from tapioca starch dissolve, releasing kid-friendly flavours like chocolate, strawberry, caramel, cookies 'n cream and vanilla. The Sipahh adds only two grams of sugar per glass, contains no artificial colours or preservatives, and is fat-free, gluten-free, mess-free and recyclable. The company has ramped up from five full-time employees in 2005 to 40 in early 2007. Product development and innovation is based in Australia (where the Sipahh was created), and they've established high-volume manufacturing operations in China to support surging global demand.

Sipahh Straws are already part of the menu in McDonald's restaurants in South Africa and Germany. And in Australia, coupled with reduced-fat milk, the straws became the beverage component of the new Happy Meal launched last month. Unistraw International is also offering the Sipahh in Denny's restaurants in the U.S. on a trial basis.

The Sipahh's Canadian distributor is Oakville, Ont.-based Avalanche Foods, and president Mohan Thawani says that they're planning an April rollout. At a suggested retail price of $2.99 for a box of 10, "we anticipate selling $6 million at retail in 2007," says Thawani. That's roughly 50 million straws in its first 12-month period, during which the Sipahh will be sold at major grocery, drug, and mass merchandise stores.



SIPAHH! Chocolate milk without the mixing

It's an aggressive target, but Thawani figures anything that makes it easier for parents to get kids to drink their milk will be a hit. "I know my kids drink more milk now than ever before," he says. "And there is no reason that other kids won't do the same." M

CORBIS CP

Wikipedia's trouble with the truth

BY STEVE MAICH • Wikipedia's fragile reputation suffered another blow last week, with the revelation that one of the company's high-profile managers lied about his credentials in a July story in *The New Yorker* magazine. The wildly popular "online encyclopedia" relies on legions of anonymous Internet users to write and edit entries on over a million topics. Ever since the site's founding in 2001, there have been debates about the reliability of its articles. But up to now, the basic honesty of those behind the endeavour has rarely been questioned. That's all changed thanks to a person previously known only by the online pseudonym "Essjay."

The New Yorker article in question, entitled "Know It All" by Pulitzer prize-winning author Stacy Schiff, described Essjay as a volunteer site administrator, among the more prominent and respected members of the Wiki community. According to the article, Essjay held "a Ph.D. in theology and a degree in canon law" and was "a tenured professor of religion at a private university." Still, he dedicated hours a day to policing the site for mistakes, misinformation and deliberate mischief.

But in an editor's note in its March 5 edition, the magazine revealed that, in fact, "Essjay" is a 24-year-old named Ryan Jordan, who holds no advanced degrees, has never taught, and was recently hired to work for Wikia, Wikipedia's for-profit online magazine site based on its user-generated model.

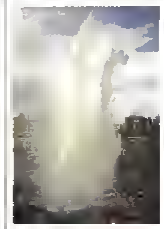
The New Yorker did not respond to a request for comment, but the controversy has been fuelled by less-than-contrite responses from both Jordan (who said his lies were meant to thwart would-be stalkers and other miscreants, and that it was the magazine's fault for failing to realize his identity was faked) and by Wikipedia founder Jimmy Wales, who told the magazine that Jordan's lies were just part his pseudonym. "I really don't have a problem with it," he said.

For a company attempting to transition from online co-operative into a genuine media business—one that is supposed to be founded on the bedrock of reliability and trust—the Essjay affair raises serious questions. If credibility isn't an essential part of Wikipedia's business model, does it have a hope of surviving? And if the answer is "yes," what does that say about devaluation of truth in the Wikisphere? M

Water: the next global money-maker

BY JASON KIRBY • Water is big business, whether it's upgrading London's Victorian-era pipes or dealing with the hundreds of Chinese cities that pump raw sewage into the ocean. So it's no surprise some investment firms are selling water as the next hot commodity to slake a parched portfolio.

The Criterion Water Infrastructure Fund, a new mutual fund, invests in companies in the water industry. Some are utilities, says Ian McPherson, president of Criterion Investments in Toronto, but most lay pipes and valves, build treatment plants, or focus on water technologies like desalination. There are more than 700 water infrastructure companies worldwide, worth US$1.7 trillion. Yet investors have tended to overlook the sector, viewing it as dull. Instead, McPherson calls it a recession-proof growth industry. "This is one commodity where there's a natural right for everyone to have it," he says. "But it's becoming more difficult for people to get."



WATER systems are in terrible shape

The fund will be managed by Pictet Asset Management of Switzerland, which has run a US$5 billion water fund for seven years. Worldwide, there's a growing awareness of both water's scarcity and growing value. But in Canada, with its abundant fresh water, people have howled at the notion of equating water with profit. McPherson, who hopes the fund will catch on with retail investors, is keenly aware of the concern. "It's a cultural thing that we think there's a social right to water," he says. "Our fund accepts that premise right out. There is no concept of private water rights being resold so poor people can't afford it."

On the contrary, global water infrastructure is in dismal condition, and experts say the public markets are going to be essential to improve the situation. Governments in both the developed and developing worlds are mandating that hundreds of new water projects be undertaken. But it will be up to the private sector to build the parts and develop the technology to make them a reality—and hopefully make a healthy profit at the same time. M



PETTIT, Bowersox and Budarin were approaching the human body's G-force survival limit

LOST IN SPACE

After the space shuttle disaster, three survivors had no safe way home

When the space shuttle Columbia disintegrated in the skies over Texas on Feb. 1, 2003, killing the seven crew members on board, three men were left marooned on the International Space Station. With the shuttle fleet grounded, mission controls in Houston and Moscow had no way to bring home American astronauts Ken Bowersox and Don Pettit, and Russian cosmonaut Nikolai Budarin. No way, that is, except for a cramped Soyuz capsule latched to the station. Despite intense misgivings—NASA thought Soyuz technology was archaic, and was appalled that this particular model had never been tested—the Americans had no choice but to agree. On May 3, the three men took off with Budarin at the controls. It was not, as Chris Jones's riveting account Too Far From Home *(Anansi) relates, a textbook re-entry.*

"LOOK AT THAT FIRE," Bowersox said.

He and Pettit each saw the lost modules roll out past their windows and begin burning up. They were glad for not having been in them. But they didn't know there was still reason for concern. They didn't know that were everything in order, they wouldn't have been able to see what they saw. They didn't know that one of the small rockets assigned to keep their capsule stable had fired less than a second too late.

And then their own windows filled with plasma and fire.

"There's so much fire," Bowersox said, filled with wonder.

"Yes," Budarin replied, sounding distracted. He knew that some fire was normal, a product of the heat generated by re-entry, the capsule trailing it like a meteor's tail. But even for Budarin, the fire seemed brighter than normal, more intense. It might have been his imagination, but the temperature inside Soyuz also seemed on the rise. Sweat started to run into his eyes. Blinking it back and turning his head to sneak a peek through one of the windows, he said, almost to himself, "Yes, we are on fire pretty good."

Bowersox and Pettit both marvelled at the glow. But in his concern, Budarin had grown deaf to their awe. He was scanning the instruments and gauges, one by one, trying to find something, anything, that wasn't right. Suddenly, his eyes grew wide when a monitor flashed in front of him, and a telltale light—called, ominously, the BS light—blinked on.

Bowersox saw it, too. Uh oh, he thought.

Holy f--king shit was more like it.

The computers had announced that whether Expedition Six liked it or not, Soyuz was about to be pushed into a steep, ballistic descent. Instead of the usual semi-gentle fall into gravity's embrace, they were primed to enter an accelerated, lung-crunching dive into elementary physics. There was no longer time for grace. For whatever reason, the hardware wanted them home, as soon as possible. It was as though the three men had been loaded into a shotgun and fired straight into the earth.

In English, Bowersox gave Pettit the red alert. "Don, BS is lit up, and we don't know why," he said. Resorting to his typical understatement, he added, "It's probably going to be a fairly aggressive entry."

Budarin noticed that something was wrong with the capsule's left side.

"I didn't touch anything," Bowersox said.

Pettit, unable to ignore the hint of anxiety that Bowersox had failed to stifle during his self-defence, began to worry out loud. "Why the BS?" he asked in Russian.

Perhaps because of the stress of the moment, Bowersox replied to him in kind. "We don't know, Don," he said, before switching over to English. "Tighten up your belts as much as you can."

The three men began tugging on their restraints, trying to find safe places for all of the loose things that were about to turn into projectiles.

"We'll make it, guys," Budarin said.

"Kolai, you're good," Bowersox replied.

"Guys," Budarin said, trying to stay focused on the instruments in front of him through a growing shake. "Hold on, guys, hold on."

NASA CHIEF Sean O'Keefe arrived at mission control, along with Micki Pettit and Annie Bowersox, looking excited and put together, what with Micki wearing her snappy hat. Only Marina Budarin, obedient to Russian custom—it was the worst kind of luck for a wife to wait for a cosmonaut's landing—was absent. The two American women took their seats near O'Keefe, and he turned to smile at them. Returning the smile, Micki and Annie leaned forward to get a better look down at the floor of technicians below.

"CAN YOU HEAR US?" Budarin repeated again and again. But there was no response from the ground. Expedition Six were alone.

Budarin's breathing grew harder. "Tighten up as much as you can," he said through gritted teeth.

Bowersox licked his lips. Pettit closed his eyes.

Budarin had levelled his sights to a single gauge in front of him, the needle in it bouncing and rising slowly, recording the G forces that had begun to sit on their chests like barbells.

"We're at 2.0," Budarin said, a little nervously, "2.3. Hold on, guys."

"We're holding on," Bowersox said in Russian. And then, in English, he said to Don, "Take a deep breath while you can."

The capsule had begun to spin. There was noise, snaps and rattles and groans, and vibration, each rising in pitch. Outside, fire and plasma danced, coating windows with ash. Alarm bells went off, if only in their minds.

"Don, how are you?" Budarin asked. "Speak so we can hear you."

"Da," Don said.

Budarin continued the count. "...30...35...39... Don, speak to me, say something to me."

"Da," Don said again, this time croaking it out.

Their spines compressed. Their eats rang. Pettit could feel sweat streaming back from his forehead and soaking his hair, as though he were in a centrifuge. Bowersox fought to keep his tongue from slipping down his throat.

"...40...43.5...44...47... oh, it's pressing good."

Already, nearly a 1,000 lb. sat on each of their chests, and things were only getting worse. With every second it grew harder and harder for them to breathe, their gasps already short and shallow. It took everything in Budarin for him to continue to talk.

"...50...60..."

They approached the G-force limits that the human body, if left in a vulnerable position, can survive for any length of time. After nearly six months in space, weightless and free, for this brave trio it felt like torture, as though some maniac wanted to see how far he could push them before they finally broke in half. Budarin continued to talk, but soon his audience had trouble listening. So much blood had been pushed to the backs of their brains that Bowersox and Pettit felt as though they had been sucker-punched. Were they not already flat on their backs, they would have been knocked there.

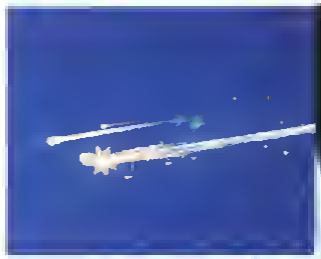
"...70...75...79...80..."

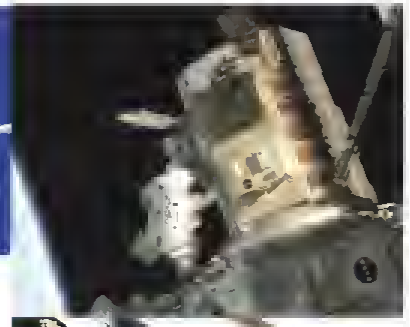
Now Expedition Six had reached an almost mythical number. Several racetracks have been redesigned because drivers in their new, faster cars have reached 50 in the corners and risked passing out and crashing. At 80, Bowersox, Budarin, and Pettit were sustaining an occasionally lethal level of crush, one that threatened to pinch their weakened lungs shut tight. They couldn't have been blamed if they had panicked. This was one more surprise that they could have done without.

Fortunately, inevitably, Soyuz continued its fall through the atmosphere. Warmer, denser air began slowing them down, and right when they needed it to, the weight began to lift.

"...76...75...7.1...6.5... It's great," Budarin wheezed.

"...4.3...3.5...3.11...2.8...2.2...1.7..."





COLUMBIA disintegrating over Texas, Bowersox outside the space station, and being helped at the landing site



OR SCOTT LIEBERMAN/AP. NASA. MIKHAIL GRACHYEV/REUTERS. NASA

Bowersox and Pettit blinked back their fogs. Their blood began rising back into their faces, their tongues meeting their unclenching teeth. They took great, gulping breaths, as though a bully had just taken his foot off their necks. Most important, they even found it in them to smile, having passed one more test, but with more to come.

"Don, get ready for the parachute," Bowersox said.

"Okay," Pettit said, weakly.

"It's easy now," Budarin said. "Now we'll have *fun* again."

Bowersox, however, wasn't yet thinking about spreading out a blanket in the sunshine. Instead, he was busy pouring all of his might into willing the parachute to open. By the book, it was part of the Soyuz's automated operation, and he bristled at the lack of control—not just the pilot in him but the hardened realist in him who had survived one malfunction and didn't fancy his chances of surviving another.

Just then, the small drogue chute opened, filling with air. But the huge main chute didn't follow its lead. The pyrotechnic bolts that kept it folded tight still hadn't fired. Bowersox shook his head. He wished for a huge red button to appear in front of him that he could press, hard, and more than once, to release the parachute. But there wasn't one. There was just the cruel wait, while Expedition Six continued racing toward the cold, hard earth. The gauges showed the capsule was travelling more slowly than it had been, but when it comes to falling out of the sky, pace is a relative thing. The three men were still going plenty fast enough to dig their own graves.

IN MOSCOW, where officials anticipated Soyuz to make its gentle touchdown within 16 minutes—how close to home Columbia had been when it was lost for good—the radios came back to life just in time to broadcast a short, loud blast of static. Then the radios crackled, and then they went dead.

In the silence, a few of the technicians put their faces into their hands. A few of the others looked snow white.

WAY OUT THERE

SCIENTISTS UNLEASH ZOMBIE PIGEONS

Chinese researchers have learned how to control the minds of pigeons, such as they are. By placing tiny electrodes in the birds' brains, they could command them to fly right, left, up or down. Previous work with electrodes and animals has been driven by military and intelligence needs, and scientists at Shandong University of Science and Technology say that the remote control of pigeons could be put to practical use in the future.

Because sometimes, bad things can happen twice

The Americans in the gallery weren't all that alarmed by the stern masks suddenly put on by their Russian colleagues. Nor were they unsettled by the tense quiet or by the occasional arrival of a harried looking subordinate, whispering into the ears of one superior or another.

Locked away in this great room in the dark, and unable to speak Russian or make out the whispers, they had been dunked into a kind of isolation tank. They were oblivious to the possibility that three of the principal parts were being played by fire and smoke and ash. Finally, O'Keefe, Micki and Annie saw the screens at the front of the room fill with grainy colour footage of a Soyuz capsule thumping into the steppes, kicking up dirt. Its orange and-white parachute rolled out in front of it in a gentle breeze, flapping like a deflated hot-air balloon, and within minutes, soldiers and technicians huddled in helicopters had spotted it and touched down nearby. The film, in essence, showed a textbook landing and recovery unfolding. In the balcony, there was relief. All that remained was the cracking of the hatch.

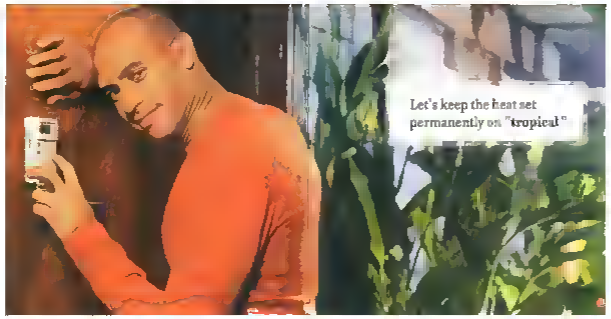
But suddenly an open radio transmission that had been playing for the assembled crowd, which now included a number of Russian reporters, crackled with the concerned voices of search pilots who hadn't yet caught sight of Expedition Six's parachute. The Americans were confused by the seeming discrepancy between what they were seeing in front of them and what they were hearing through the radio. And then it dawned on them—not quite all at once, but instantaneously enough for a feeling of dread to spread like a virus through the balcony gang—that the footage that they had been watching was stock.

Just then, there was a buzz among the Russians, some of whom had begun to sweat. When they weren't listening to the radio, they spoke mostly in hushes. They weren't speaking in hushes anymore. Finally, after 10 minutes, O'Keefe's Russian counterpart Yuri Koptev told O'Keefe that the pilots hadn't seen the parachute because Soyuz had overshot its landing site by a few kilometers. No doubt it would be spotted presently.

For the Americans, the uncertainty was bewildering at first and made them feel sick second. When everything goes according to plan, Soyuz lands in an area precise enough for rescue teams to see its parachute open.

This time around, there had been no sighting. There was only an empty sky. M

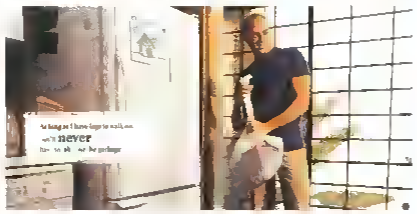
From Too Far From Home *by Chris Jones reprinted by permission of House of Anansi.*



WHAT A GIRL WANTS

A new book, 'Porn for Women,' answers the age-old question

BY JULIA MCINNELL • Sigmund Freud was so stumped by the question—what do women want?—he came up with the theory of penis envy. But do women really want to be like men? Not exactly, according to a study by noted couples therapist John Gottman. For 30 years, he's been studying the success and failure of relationships and has found that what women *really* want is a man who will help out with housework. "Household standards differ a lot between men and women," he writes. "It's a revelation to most guys that the curtains ought to match the upholstery, or that curtains are a good idea at all."



In his latest book, *And Baby Makes Three*, Gottman uses an example from the play, *Defending the Caveman*, in which a man comes home to find his wife cleaning the bathroom. "He said, 'Are we moving?' As a single man, he'd wiped down a bathtub only to get his security deposit back." But Gottman says men who vacuum, do the dishes and otherwise equally share the division of domestic labour have more frequent sex with their wives, and happier marriages.

And so perhaps *Porn for Women* was inevitable. It's a new book by something called the Cambridge Women's Pornography Cooperative, which wants to reclaim "pornography from the gold-chained, hairy chested, leisure suit wearing, mouth-breathing knuckleheads." And it features, among others, pictures of men dusting, pulling over to ask directions, and practising the art of seduction—with cake. A woman can always fantasize. M



God, that's **80** interesting. Tell me *more*.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY SUSAN ANDERSON

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MACLEAN'S

ROGERS
Your World Right Now

In his own words: The power to indict, and to destroy



CONRAD BLACK

My trial in Chicago is almost upon me, even as this is published. It is a great relief to be finally going to court on the main issues, and I have full faith in the outcome, which will allow Barbara and me to return to a normal life in London and in Canada. After four years of pummelling from all directions, much of it below the belt, one wants to set the record straight. I've seen myself depicted as a greedy, flamboyant crook who stole money from his company to finance a pretentious lifestyle and feed the insatiable materialism of his harridan wife. An added fillip to this has been the notion that this theft has been at the expense not only of the shareholders, but of the journalists the company employed.

This monstrous caricature has been diluted in the U.S. and largely erased in Canada, as the controversy has received some serious analysis here, but in Britain it has been spoon fed to and amplified by journalists who had no appetite to do even the most basic research. Supposedly reputable journalism seemed like the tabloids, some of which scraped depths I had not seen before. I'm not going to reveal my defence, except to say that the charges are false and the poverty of them will be exposed in court. I know I am innocent of the allegations against me, as does almost anyone who actually knows me, and I am about to prove it.

My strenuous maintenance of my innocence, though, is widely viewed as "denial," as it inconveniently contradicts the instant judgment that I was another corporate crook and a carrier of the Enron virus. I hope it will be useful to give some background to the case. American business was hit in the last decade with several terrible frauds, Enron among them, that wiped out scores of thousands of jobs and pensions and billions of dollars of stock market value, including the life savings of thousands of people. Public indignation was understandably considerable.

But, more than ever in commercial matters, the power to indict became the power to destroy. It has been wielded by a New Class of belligerent lawyers and supporting experts, using two features of the American legal system only palidly replicated in the U.K. or Canada: the plea bargain, and the criminal prosecution of corporations.

Under the first, the prosecutors single out an individual, grill and threaten and harass him, and then offer a light treatment in exchange for denunciation of higher ups, and roll upward through an organization as if toppling dominoes, until all fingers are pointed at the top. In our own case, the press has noted the defection of only one executive, for a minimalist sentence, despite pressures on others that the uninitiated cannot imagine. Innocent people can be hounded and threatened night and day, to compel them to accuse others and save themselves. Every possible aspect of a person's life can be pried open and misrepresented in defamatory leaks to dozens of countries had been disemployed.

Our company had a flourishing business. There had been no bankruptcy or lost jobs or pensions or life savings. The attack required the orchestrated hostility of the lower courts, security regulators and tax collectors, the entire lower echelon of constricting official harassment. This was achieved in large measure by the climate created by eager accomplices in the press, who turned our case instantly into a sort of journalistic Ponzi scheme in which lies and myths, fed by the prosecutors and their informants, were pyramided on top of each other to create a Manichaean epic.

It was a vintage American "shock and awe" campaign. Those in the crosshairs of the system are terrorized and exhausted by endless official impositions, cascading charges, confessions of moral outrage, and slanders leaked to the press, without any chance to face and rebut actual charges, for years, while our reputations and careers are destroyed and our means relentlessly sapped. The companies we built became platforms for our enemies as they tormented us and filled their own pockets, to the general delight of especially,

FINANCIER J.P. MORGAN and AIG's Greenberg: 'Creators of value were demonized'





CORBIS

'Innocent people can be hounded night and day to compel them to accuse others'

the press. For our part, we will, if we must, demonstrate that even government suborned perjury is hazardous.

As for the threat of criminal prosecution, what has befallen me could assail any controlling shareholder in the U.S., as the outrages inflicted on Maurice "Hank" Greenberg of AIG demonstrate. He built and controlled the greatest insurance business in the world over 40 years and was thrown out like a dead mouse when the attorney general of New York (now the governor) threatened to prosecute his directors if they did not remove the chairman. Companies can be completely destroyed by prosecution, as was the great accounting firm, Arthur Andersen, in an action the U.S. Supreme Court eventually determined to be illicit, after the company had collapsed, and nearly 100,000 people in the British media.

In the name of protecting shareholders, some $250 million of their money (especially mine, as the largest shareholder) has been spent by the self-nominated and court-approved protectors of the public shareholders. In the process, 70 per cent of the stock market value of our American company, and 90 per cent of the stock market value of our Canadian company, have been dissipated. The shareholding victims of it are finally becoming restless. My accusers took over and have largely ruined our companies, while grossly enriching themselves. I have involuntarily, as the chief shareholder, effectively been forced to pay to persecute myself.

It has been very tiresome, but also very informative, and surviving it in good heart and spirits has been rather reassuring. Physically, I feel as I did 35 years ago. Barbara and I have struggled through a great many difficulties almost every day. We have resumed writing, and despite this unholy onslaught, though there have been some disappointments, we have maintained almost all the friendships and possessions that we had valued. Our marriage is impregnable, and family relationships are even closer and more highly valued than they had been before.

THE PRESUMPTION of innocence is the basis of our criminal justice system in the U.K., Canada and the U.S., and the treatment of accused people is one of the most reliable criteria of the decency of any civilized society. In practice, the presumption of innocence in this case has been a risible fiction. And I believe that my bond, now $38 million, is the highest in U.S. history, illustrative of the frenzied and failed attempt by the U.S. government to prevent me from exercising the constitutionally guaranteed right to defend myself. (I have been able to finance my entire, very costly, defence. A particularly gratifying series of asset sales had to be conducted in the most difficult commercial circumstances I have known, fending off unhead of numbers of bottom-feeders, hucksters and charlatans, as well as spurious official meddlers.)

From a public relations standpoint, we were fortunate in our opponent. Not every one (including most Americans) loves the U.S. government. Constitutionally questionable American legislation directed against organized crime and terrorism is frequently misapplied against completely improbable people. Chunks of my assets in the U.S. were immobilized on the basis of these statutes. Proceedings were then stayed by being subsumed into new charges. Constitutional guarantees of due process, and against unlawful, uncompensated property seizure, and the assurance of the grand jury system, have not lived up to what I believe James Madison and his fellow authors of the U.S. constitution had in mind.

In our company, we built a fine business of quality products. But the creators of value were systematically and instantly demonized, and then the profiteers handed the task of trying to prove that we had acted illegally to the prosecutors, stretching out the time of their own self enrichment, the prejudice to the shareholders, and the mockery of the presumption of innocence, to almost four years.

There is no chance of recovering the more than $250 million it cost to investigate everything that went on as we built up our companies (with the utmost probity, as the evidence will reveal). When we are acquitted, the question of the justification for this orgy of self directed largesse will finally replace, as the real issue, the malignant canard of possible criminal behaviour by the present defendants. And my libel suits, the largest in Canadian history at over $3 billion, especially those against my accusers on the Hollinger special committee, which have been patiently waiting like racehorses at the starting gates, will finally proceed.

This current U.S. corporate climate is part of a pattern that is identifiable in American history. From the early and impeachable optimism of the country comes the notion that any perceived wrong can be instantly put right by legislators. This regularly leads to extreme solutions more damaging than the problems they were meant to address.

McCARTHY AND ROOSEVELT: 'Extreme solutions more damaging than the problems'





CORBIS; DON EMMERT/GETTY

'We were fortunate in our opponent. Not everyone loves the U.S. government.'

Prohibition was based on the consensus that there was too much alcoholism in the United States. Alcohol was declared to be illegal, placing one of the country's largest industries in the hands of gangsters. In the thirties, the desire not to be drawn into another European war was so great that neutrality legislation was adopted that would have made it impossible for the administration to make any moral distinction between Hitler and the British and French, had not the president been the most agile politician in the country's history. In the late forties and early fifties, there was understandable concern about Communism in government and the film industry, but the best answer was not McCarthyism and the mindless persecution of people who had been social democrats at university.

Now there is concern about corporate ethics, but the current American response is to hound and monitor corporations and frighten their officers and directors. At the same time, the issue of distribution and disparity of wealth is a legitimate public policy question, but instead of it being made the subject of a serious debate, there is a policy of totemistic tokenism: wealthy defendants are to be sacrificially pursued and thrown to the mobs, or to the beasts in the coliseum, as if this addressed the issue of why such a rich country, with thousands of (mainly meritocratic) billionaires, has 40 million poor people. America's wealthiest citizens dress in corduroy trousers and Viyella shirts, driving SUVs between campuses and junk-food emporia, to show that they are not really interested in money, other than to combat AIDS in developing countries and promote other charities. The executive class is muted and intimidated. The plea bargain system can crack almost anyone.

When the life I had worked for 35 years to build came under attack from this source in 2003, there was nothing for it but to conduct an orderly retreat to a defensible perimeter in Canada, refinance myself, and await the point when human decency requires that people fighting against years of press abuse and government harassment have a right to be heard. Now, I have never felt so welcome in Canada.

I MUST ADD a word about the British media, which I knew. Some have commented that I must be upset that so many that accepted my hospitality have so assailed me. I never imagined I was buying anyone's amiability, and the fact of being in someone's home doesn't oblige the visitor to be pleasant after they have left. I am a little more disappointed in the pompous self levitations and in some cases rabid antagonism of people who obsequiously sought my favours, and often received them, and particularly of those whom I helped through personal crises of health, marriage breakups, financial problems, and even more personal matters.

Reading the British press comments on my travails, I am grateful for those who have recalled my times as a London newspaper chairman favourably. I note, though, that even some of my supporters confine their support to *Daily Telegraph* editorial matters and defer to the notion that I perhaps have

blotted my ledger financially, and feed the myth that my wife exercised an undue influence. She did her jobs as editorial vice president and columnist, conscientiously and discreetly, and was fiercely loyal to our journalists. Her professional scruples have been very sadly unrequited. She is a magnificent person and it would normally go without saying that she deserves better.

Even the well-disposed and intelligent have been gulled by the onslaught of American corporate McCarthyist propaganda. I see, in reviews of Tom Bower's recent defamatory novel about my wife and me, that even fine publications like the *Economist* and the *Financial Times*, while panning the book as any honest or even sane person would, assume that I am financially culpable and likely to go to jail. Until the emptiness of the charges is revealed, as they are about to be, these are the lies agreed upon, even by people untainted by malice, and innocently duped.

The British pay a heavy price for having national media that are so narrowly concentrated and uniform in their group-think, so conditioned to truckling to head boy, whether it's an incumbent newspaper chairman, or any conventional wisdom. And they have gone on too long substituting stylistic flourish for research.

My impression is that the British national press bought almost completely into the theory that non competition payments were fraudulent, that I had milked the *Telegraph* and starved it and its journalists to pay for an opulent life for myself, and that my wife was a force for extravagance, pretension and political extremism. As I have written, I invite everyone who is interested to observe the debunking of all such allegations when our enemies have to prove them, instead of just thriving off the gullibility of the ignorant and the malicious, using many of the levers of the U.S. government to disseminate their message.

I look back on my days at the *Telegraph* and *Spectator* with pleasure. I caught the end of the era of the newspaper and the individualistic newspaper chairman. We took over an insolvent enterprise and made it the greatest title in Europe and the highest quality and most-respected title in the U.K. Politically, I am proud of having gone all the way with Margaret Thatcher, and then with John Major, and of having supported Tony Blair at times, especially in Ulster. I am proud also of our role in assuring that the Conservative party did not fall into the hands of Euro-integrationists, and I think most Conservatives and most British voters, would also be happy with that today.

The imbecility of much of official U.S. policy since I left the *Telegraph*, and the moral and military failure of Israel in Lebanon last year, make our views on the subject of those countries less presentable than they were when I was urging a more generous treatment of American and Israeli official policy than was then fashionable in the British media. I believe that they were the right opinions at the time. I am also proud of the *Daily Telegraph*'s undoubted victory in the price war, where we retained our market leading status despite a furious assault from News Corp.

In Canada, I'm proud that we gave the country a first-class written daily press, and an alternative to the orthodoxy of the long-governing Liberal party and the incumbent national media. We helped importantly to unite the federal Conservatives, who are now governing very effectively. Above all, in both countries, I am proud that we tried to separate comment from reporting, tried to be fair, and emphasized good writing. I wish all the titles well, and almost all those whom I knew in them. I liked the traditional newspaper business, and was faithful to its better standards, but I lost faith in it commercially and started to depart it in the late nineties, very advantageously. I had naturally not foreseen such a perturbed exit strategy.

The most annoying of all Bower's unfamities were his attacks on my wife, and on my parents, who have been dead for 30 years. Barbara is falsely accused of being slatternly, screeching, fanatical and money grubbing, and my father of being an unscrupulous, bigoted drunkard and failed executive. Barbara is a perfect wife and a fine writer who has never raised her voice in her adult life. My father was a universally respected and utterly honest and tolerant man, an original and decent person of high intellect and a marvelous sense of humour, which an hour's research would have verified.

To be fair, Bower engages in no fault, equal opportunity disparagement. Henry Kissinger and Lord Carrington, William F. Buckley and George Will, were all gulled or bought; my directors were failed fiduciaries, and the highly capable Marie Josée Kravis, now president of the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, is a "scatterbrain." I was amused to be described by an unnamed source as a "wooden bull dozer" (it reminded me of Andrei Gromyko's description of Anwar Sadat as a "paper camel") Less acceptable was Bower's criticism of my book on Franklin D. Roosevelt, which has been well received, for excessive reliance on secondary sources. That is bunk in itself, but especially hard to take from this myth-making sleaze-merchant. His book comes close to Mary McCarthy's famous review of Lillian Hellman, that "every word she writes is a lie, including 'and' and 'the'."

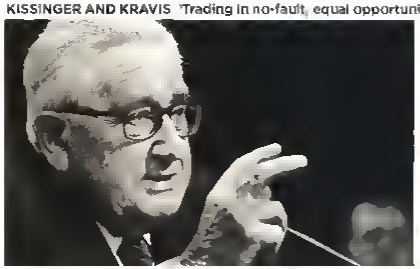
I prefer to take the flattering opinions Bower expressed to me in his obsequious emails in his unsuccessful quest for an interview, which will be produced in court, along with a great deal of other evidence he will find uncongenial. Since I have sued him, I will not argue the case here, but anyone who wants to see my very extensive statement of claim, detailing scores of distinct libels, should know that it is a matter of public record.

But here again, the fetid solidarity of Fleet Street is evident. While most of the London reviews were negative, most also subscribed to some version of the Big Lie about financial chicanery, while acknowledging that I had saved the *Telegraph* from insolvency and strengthened it as a product in the hands of the readers. By contrast, American and Canadian reviewers have been almost universally censorious of the author. A distinguished Canadian law professor wrote that "Bower has the unusual knack of eavesdropping on prayer. 'Black would consult the Almighty and be reassured that whatever course of life he decided upon—any plan, ruse, or conspiracy—would improve mankind.' One wonders if Bower would like to see God indicted as a co-conspirator." Another eminent law professor wrote that it was a "drive-by smear." The *New York Times* called it "a sad little ... squeak," the *Globe and Mail* "an assassination."

I have never had the slightest doubt of the outcome of a fair trial, knowing that the judgment of the legality of my actions will lie in the hands of 12 American citizens, in one of that country's greatest cities, more or less at the bar of Abraham Lincoln and Clarence Darrow. Those with any interest will soon be able to determine whether the braying, hideous *tricoteuses* among my accusers, especially in the British press, the prosecutors' most obedient cheering section, or my supporters and I, have spoken the truth. It will be a relief to expose my accusers and their parrots and their false charges.

Barbara and I look forward to returning to London when I have been vindicated, later this year, and then dividing our time between London and Canada. There is life after the *Telegraph*, as increasing numbers of people are discovering, and personnel depart my successor regime in droves. I will note some of the constructive remarks of some British commentators, and promise to be more observant of British sensibilities, though I thought I got on well with almost everyone I actually knew there, and our British friends have been splendid in their solidarity. After all that has happened in the last four years, and no longer having much to do with the media, we will be ready for a quieter life. We think of our return happily at the end of each full day, grateful though we are to be in Canada. Being falsely accused may be character-building, but it is not much fun. M

KISSINGER AND KRAVIS 'Trading in no-fault, equal opportunity disparagement'





MARK WILSON/GETTY EVAN AGOSTINI/GETTY

'Bower's book plumbs profound depths of mendacity, libel and prosaic clumsiness'

THE FINAL NADIR in the plunge to defile my wife and me, the last lap in bilious and oafish defamation, and the last and lowest of the animals unleashed against me by News Corp., was Bower's book. It plumbs profound depths of mendacity, libel and prosaic clumsiness. I have seen a great many libels, but I have never seen anything as contemptible as this.



DON'T BE AN IDIOT, CHECK YOUR LOTTO NUMBERS

Some "idiot" won US$800,000 in a lottery and hadn't claimed the prize. That's what a co-worker said to Iowa resident Ed O'Neill last January. It made O'Neill check his ticket last week. he became a minor celebrity when he finally cashed that ticket in. When he twigged to his good fortune, he said, he had to convince his wife to take him seriously during a phone call. "Quit horsing around," she said. "I'm watching *Oprah*."

The race to build a better brain

A new computer chip pushes the machine-human interface

BY DANYLO HAWALESHKA • In a fifth floor lab of the University of Toronto's $108 million Bahen Centre for Information Technology, assistant professor Roman Genov suddenly becomes nervous. At Genov's request, a well meaning grad student shows a guest one of the electrical engineer's groundbreaking microchips, designed and built to record brain activity in unprecedented detail. After the student cracks the lid on the protective plastic case, she reaches to remove the pill-sized, $16,000 processor from its cushy foam bed. Genov can barely contain himself. "Don't touch this," he stammers, his hand reaching to intercept hers. She balks; Genov relaxes. "Just keep it in there."

There are only two such chips, and dropping one on the floor would be a catastrophic setback to Genov's research into the arcane world of how the brain functions. It represents no less than a new threshold in the scientific evolution of the machine-human interface. The goal is to create what is essentially a mini computer and implant it in the brain to monitor electrical activity in someone who, for example, suffers from epilepsy. The implant would then detect the onset of a seizure and trigger its own signal to stop the event.

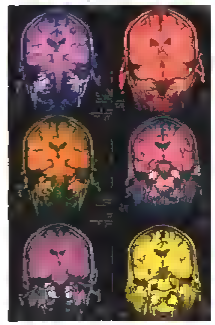
That day is far away, and it may never come. But collaborators say Genov's chips will certainly further our understanding of the brain, and there are few if any chips that are better. Wherever it is that we eventually find ourselves, it will be because of a collaborative alchemy, the result of a multidisciplinary effort that, in addition to Genov, includes Ben Bardakjian, a mathematics expert at the Institute of Biomaterials and Biomedical Engineering, and U of T electrophysiologist Dr. Peter Carlen. Together, the trio are melding hardware, software and biology. "The sexy application is seizure prevention and control, which may or may not work," Carlen says. "But what will work almost for sure is the ability to have wireless, low power chips with multiple sensors, packaged with some computing power to analyze brain activity."

The vast majority of today's electronics are digital, but the language of nature is analog. The brain isn't either on or off. There's a spectrum of electrical activity that can be measured. Genov's chip consists of a sliver of silicon embedded with transistors and capacitors, on top of which sit 256 electrodes that resemble a bed of nails. "We are among the top groups in the world with the largest number of recording channels," Genov says.

Current testing monitors dissected rat brains. One key design challenge is keeping heat buildup in the chip to a bare minimum. To avoid burning body tissue, the microchip cannot rise more than one degree Celsius. Genov has accomplished this, astonishing when one considers that in performing certain functions, his chip exceeds the computing power of a Pentium processor—a chip that generates so much heat it will burn skin if touched.

In Carlen's lab at Toronto Western Hospital, graduate students Marija Cotic and Eunji Kang are in the scientific trenches—Cotic developing new ways to analyze complex data gathered from several electrodes at multiple sites on the brain, Kang working on ways to analyze brain states and control seizures. Dr. Demitre Serletis, a resident neurosurgeon working on his Ph.D., says the microchip is "amazing—this is the kind of thing you'd see in science fiction movies 10 years ago, and here we are, starting to do this research—and getting results." Carlen repeatedly refers to the chip as beautiful. Why? "That box there is an amplifier for two voltage sensing channels [to read the brain's electrical activity]," Carlen says, pointing to a device the size of a VCR. "And Roman has chips that have 256 voltage sensors you can barely see with your eye. That's beautiful." M

HARDWARE, Beats a Pentium



GETTY

'THE SEXY APPLICATION IS SEIZURE PREVENTION AND CONTROL, WHICH MAY OR MAY NOT WORK'

'MAYBE ONE OF US WOULD HAVE HAD THE WEREWITHAL TO KICK OVER THE ONLY TUB OF POISON IN TOWN'—STEPHAN JONES, SON OF THE ARCHITECT OF THE 1978 JONESTOWN MASSACRE

STEPHAN JONES
REFLECTING ON SINS OF HIS FATHER

He hated his father—and who could blame him? Dad was Jim Jones, who ordered the suicide/murder of 913 people, including Stephan Jones's mother and six of his siblings. Stephan escaped the 1978 Jonestown massacre because he was playing basketball in the Guyanese capital of Georgetown. Some say basketball saved his life. But if the team had stayed in Jonestown, he says, "maybe one of us would have had the wherewithal to kick over the only tub of poison in town and have it drain into the earth rather than into the bodies of our loved ones." Stephan—who participated in a new Canadian docudrama, *Jonestown Paradise Lost*, airing next week on Vision TV—has forgiven his father. "It's been a long time since I've viewed it as a tragedy," he says. "I've come to see it as an opportunity, a gift to us all." While conceding his father was a monster, "he taught me to express love—that men can be soft and gentle," says Stephan, who has since fathered three daughters and is now 47, his father's age when he died.

MIRA NAIR
AN ICONOCLAST IN MATTERS OF LOVE

Along with her Canadian friend Deepa Mehta (*Water*), Mira Nair belongs to a rare niche: internationally acclaimed female directors from India. And like Mehta, Nair (*Monsoon Wedding*, *Kama Sutra*) likes to question India's conservative mores. "I make big, circus of life films," says Nair, whose latest, *The Namesake* (based on a Pulitzer Prize winning novel), is an epic romance about a couple who emigrate from Calcutta to New York after an arranged marriage. "I loved the eros of that idea, that two strangers marry, *then* fall in love," says the director. When Nair was 18, her mother sent her to meet a prospective husband. "I was a wild girl," she recalls. "I took both my brothers with me and I walked up to the father in law to be and said, 'Meet my two boyfriends—I don't know which one I'm going to sleep with tonight.' That was the end of the proposal. This guy ended up marrying another Mira."

JOHN DAVISON
CANADA'S HERO OF THE WICKET

Being born in Canada has turned out to be the best move cricketer John Davison ever made. Davison spent just five weeks in Campbell River, B.C., where his Australian parents were teaching, before returning to Oz. After a modest career as a professional cricket player in Australia, he's had a second chance at success as captain of the Canadian squad, thanks to the lack of home grown talent for the sport. At the 2003 Cricket World Cup in South Africa, Davison set a competition record for the fastest 100 runs, and led Canada to a surprising victory against Bangladesh (although it was to be their only victory in the tournament). His presence will again give Team Canada a modicum of credibility at this year's cup, which starts next week in the Caribbean. "My mates back in Australia are extremely jealous of the opportunities I've had," says Davison.

JEAN-MARIE LE PEN
IS FRANCE'S EXTREME LEADER FINISHED?

Perennial right-wing politician Jean-Marie Le Pen might be excluded from France's April 22 election. The 78 year-old National Front leader has until March 16 to get the legally mandated minimum endorsement of 500 elected officials to become a presidential candidate, and as of last Friday he was at least 100 signatures short. But while Le Pen scrambled, many politicians were unwilling to be associated with a man who called Nazi gas chambers a "detail of history," and whose beliefs toward immigrants have been labelled racist and xenophobic. He has charged that rivals are undermining his effort to get on the presidential ballot, and his situation grew more difficult when a hacker stole Le Pen's confidential list of current political backers. Calling the signature requirement "anti democratic," National Front spokesman Julien Sanchez noted that Le Pen is polling well, with 14 per cent of voters and placed second behind Jacques Chirac in the last presidential race. He called for international help. "Americans send monitors to elections in Africa. They should send them here."

JOSEPH KABILA
GHOST IN THE CABINET HAUNTS A GOVERNMENT

Last year's elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the first multi-party vote since 1960, marked a moment of great hope for the central African nation. After years of dictatorship and civil war, 70 per cent turned out to vote, and Joseph Kabila, de facto leader since 2001, won a legitimate presidency. But rumours of a "ghost" in his government threaten to shake his credibility. The man appointed minister of trade appears not to exist at all. It's believed he was concocted by a coalition party leader in a bid to guarantee himself a cabinet post (parties are required to submit a choice of two names for each spot, the leader expected himself to be picked). But it seems Kabila's prime minister chose the unknown rather than give the job to a former spokesman of his bitter enemy, former strongman Mobutu Sese Seko. "Nowhere else in the world could you attempt to swear in a ghost," one civil servant noted.

LEWIS 'SCOOTER' LIBBY
'MIS-RECOLLECTING' STILL MEANS GUILTY

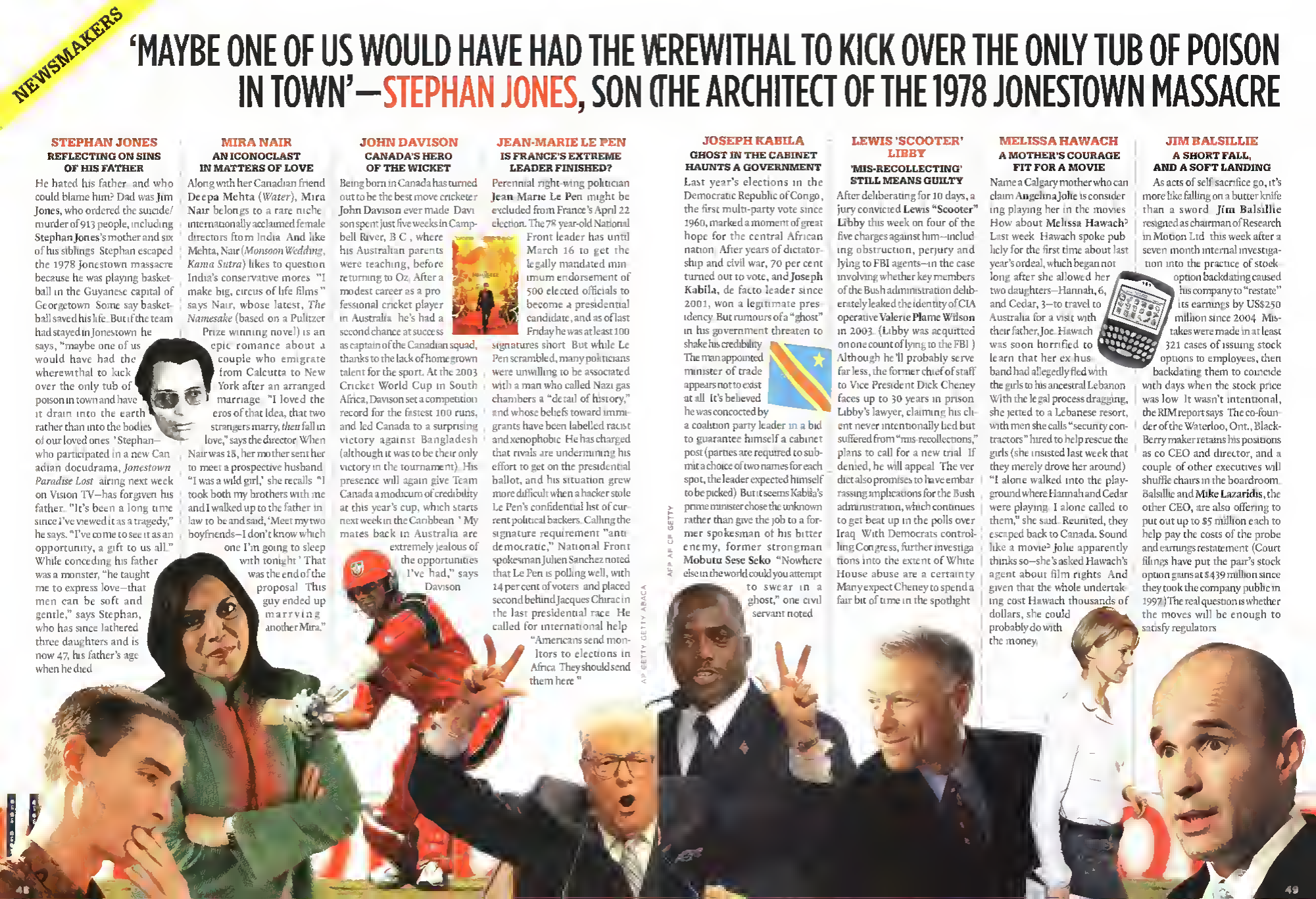
After deliberating for 10 days, a jury convicted Lewis "Scooter" Libby this week on four of the five charges against him—including obstruction, perjury and lying to FBI agents—in the case involving whether key members of the Bush administration deliberately leaked the identity of CIA operative Valerie Plame Wilson in 2003. (Libby was acquitted on one count of lying to the FBI.) Although he'll probably serve far less, the former chief of staff to Vice President Dick Cheney faces up to 30 years in prison. Libby's lawyer, claiming his client never intentionally lied but suffered from "mis recollections," plans to call for a new trial. If denied, he will appeal. The verdict also promises to have embarrassing implications for the Bush administration, which continues to get beat up in the polls over Iraq. With Democrats controlling Congress, further investigations into the extent of White House abuse are a certainty. Many expect Cheney to spend a fair bit of time in the spotlight.

MELISSA HAWACH
A MOTHER'S COURAGE FIT FOR A MOVIE

Name a Calgary mother who can claim Angelina Jolie is considering playing her in the movies. How about Melissa Hawach? Last week Hawach spoke publicly for the first time about last year's ordeal, which began not long after she allowed her two daughters—Hannah, 6, and Cedar, 3—to travel to Australia for a visit with their father, Joe. Hawach was soon horrified to learn that her ex husband had allegedly fled with the girls to his ancestral Lebanon. With the legal process dragging, she jetted to a Lebanese resort, with men she calls "security contractors" hired to help rescue the girls (she insisted last week that they merely drove her around). "I alone walked into the playground where Hannah and Cedar were playing. I alone called to them," she said. Reunited, they escaped back to Canada. Sound like a movie? Jolie apparently thinks so—she's asked Hawach's agent about film rights. And given that the whole undertaking cost Hawach thousands of dollars, she could probably do with the money.

JIM BALSILLIE
A SHORT FALL, AND A SOFT LANDING

As acts of self sacrifice go, it's more like falling on a butter knife than a sword. Jim Balsillie resigned as chairman of Research in Motion Ltd. this week after a seven month internal investigation into the practice of stock option backdating caused his company to "restate" its earnings by US$250 million since 2004. Mistakes were made in at least 321 cases of issuing stock options to employees, then backdating them to coincide with days when the stock price was low. It wasn't intentional, the RIM report says. The co-founder of the Waterloo, Ont., BlackBerry maker retains his positions as co CEO and director, and a couple of other executives will shuffle chairs in the boardroom. Balsillie and Mike Lazaridis, the other CEO, are also offering to put out up to $5 million each to help pay the costs of the probe and earnings restatement (Court filings have put the pair's stock option gains at $439 million since they took the company public in 1997.) The real question is whether the moves will be enough to satisfy regulators.



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COURTESY TMN

Dexter is a murderer who only targets other murderers—and he's a great listener. What's not to love? BY WENDY DENNIS

The thinking woman's killer

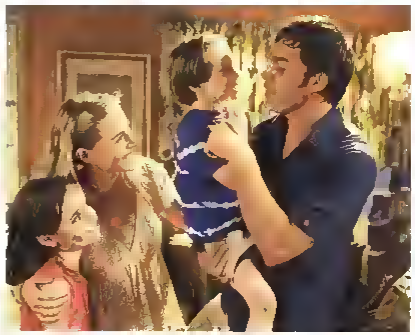
tv

It's not often that television proves to be as riveting as *Dexter*, Showtime's critically acclaimed original series about a blood-spatter expert with the Miami police force who moonlights as a serial killer. Based on *Darkly Dreaming Dexter*, by the American crime novelist Jeff Lindsay, *Dexter* is a fascinating study in psychopathology, a nail-biting whodunit, an operatic riff on *CSI* style forensics, and a magical mystery tour of the sensual Vermeer-lit landscape of Miami. On The Movie Network, which is currently replaying the first season, the series is ranked No. 1 with adults. (In Western Canada, it airs on Movie Central.)

Both men and women are captivated by *Dexter*, but women appear to have a special affection for the lead character, Dexter Morgan, played by Golden Globe–nominated actor Michael C. Hall, a.k.a. the gay mortician from *Six Feet Under*. According to Kevin Wright, senior vice president of programming for Astral Television Networks (which owns The Movie Network), the show's Nielsen ratings reveal that women constitute almost half of its audience, a "significant jump" from the percentage who normally watch TMN.

Dexter just may be the first thinking woman's serial killer. Certainly, he's not your run-of-the-mill sociopath. For a murderer, he's a stand-up guy. He brings doughnuts to his co-workers, he's sweet to his girlfriend, and great with her kids. He's also a devoted, if emotionally unavailable, supporter of his sister Deb, a feisty homicide cop who works with him at the precinct.

True, Dexter's crime prevention methods are unconventional, and he has blood-lust management issues. But it's not his fault he hungers for the thrill of the kill. Blood is in his blood. As a child, he witnessed his mother's gruesome murder, and was rescued and adopted by a good cop named Harry, who identified Dexter's homicidal tendencies early, and channelled them for good. Like all heroes, Dexter lives by a code. He only targets the vilest of criminals who would otherwise slip through the cracks of the justice system. While Dexter may carve up his victims and stuff them into Hefty bags—admittedly a concern in a man you're entertaining as a romantic interest—on the plus side, he's ridding the planet of scum, and making the world a safer place. Think serial killer with a heart of gold.


HE'S A DOTING boyfriend to Rita, and great with her kids

Linda Chandler is a Toronto advertising creative director, who, like many female fans, has developed a crush on Dexter. "He's bright, like all serial murderers, but he's also a great boyfriend," she says. "He doesn't try anything on the first date, and he's amenable to everything you do." Also, because he lacks real empathy, he has had to master the art of appearing as if he truly cares about others. "On a date, you're going to feel fascinating because he's going to listen to you and not go on about himself," she says.

Chandler sees Dexter as an irresistible mix of the classic anti-hero and the cartoon superhero. "He's doing work that's esoteric and difficult," she says. "He has a secret life, and we know he's struggling very hard to keep a code. And he's a religious man. It's not the gospel according to St. Matthew. It's the gospel according to his foster father."

Dexter may have issues, but, for the most part, he keeps his dark side under wraps. Since he lacks the vocabulary to negotiate human interactions, he gets by faking it, and he gives Oscar-worthy performances. Of all the cops at his Miami precinct, only the volcanic Sgt. Doakes is creeped out by him. Women, on the other hand, fall at his feet. A middle-aged file room clerk who admired his dad is beguiled by his flirty charm. She thinks he's a chip off the old block, and slips him files whenever he asks. His lieutenant, Maria, can't stop making eyes at him, and blatantly treats him as her pet. His girlfriend Rita considers him the perfect boyfriend: he's cute, protective, thoughtful, and—apparently sensitive to the fact that she was traumatized by her abusive, crack-addicted estranged husband—he never presses her for sex.

tv

In his *New Yorker* review of the show, Tad Friend found the lieutenant's attraction to Dexter "inexplicable," but no woman I know would question her dewy-eyed fixation. Sure, he's dead inside, sexually and emotionally dissociated, and he cares as much about people as parking meters. Sure, he keeps a ghoulish stash of his victims' blood samples behind his air conditioner, and leads a sinister double life. But he's brilliant at his job, mordantly funny (he named his boat the Slice of Life), psychologically astute—deeply aware of his limitations, and gallant toward women (he thoughtfully made Rita's

BECAUSE HE LACKS EMPATHY, HE'S LEARNED TO MASTER THE ART OF FEIGNING INTEREST IN OTHERS





IN SOME WAYS, he's the perfect catch smart, attractive, not only motivated by sax

troublesome ex disappear). He also has a modest but cool oceanside pad and divine pecs. It's a safe assumption that his horrific childhood doesn't hurt with the ladies, either. What woman can resist the chance to rescue and reform a wounded man?

"He's a puppy who winds up at your door, and you get to take care of him," says Chandler. "And if you're being stalked by evil, it's going to disappear. You're not going to ask any questions. And then he's going to show up with lattes. How great is that?"

For certain women, serial killers have always held a hypnotic fascination. As *Maclean's* writer Anne Kingston once observed, "accused or convicted murderers are bona fide chick magnets." Both Richard Ramirez and John Wayne Gacy married women while in prison, despite the fact that Ramirez murdered and dismembered 13 people and Gacy raped and murdered more than 30 young men. Scott Peterson, who was sentenced to die for killing his wife, Laci, and their unborn child, receives reams of letters from love struck female fans.

Serial killer groupies, or SKGs, as they're called, are drawn to such men for a host of pathological reasons. For some, it's about the need to act out stand-by-your-man fantasies, or to nurture the lost boy inside. For others, it's rooted in the desire to cultivate a relationship with a man who, in their minds, constitutes the ideal boyfriend. (Once he's convicted, they always know his precise whereabouts. They can also sidestep the trials of a real relationship and float endlessly on turbo-charged fantasies.) Anti-death penalty and meet a prisoner websites, such as *friendsbeyondthewall.com*, have become popular spots for a certain kind of woman to try to find a date.

Still, Dexter's no Ted Bundy. He may be cunning, methodical, and capable of killing without remorse—but there's a self-awareness about him that's positively endearing. He wants a family. He wants to belong. He wants to be expressive. And it's because he's aware of his limitations that he breaks your heart. "Even though you know he does terrible things, you start rooting for the guy," says Janice Stein, a *Dexter*-obsessed Toronto apparel sales executive who manlined the entire season over three days. "You find yourself hoping that he doesn't get caught."

According to TMN's market research, men aspire to Dexter's "James Bond like power and clarity," says Wright, whereas women admire his "etiquette among thieves," and enjoy the opportunity for "vicarious vigilantism." "We don't think we have it in us to kill," says Chandler, "but liking him gives us licence to go there. Because basically, you want to kill sometimes. How did we feel when Saddam was hanged? Who wants to witness a hanging? But there was something about it that made us feel, okay, you can watch this one."

For Toronto strategic and communications consultant Jack Senechal, Dexter is the quintessential strong, silent type—like Gary Cooper. "He doesn't have to beat his breast or be the biggest guy on campus," he says. "He just quietly goes about his business." He also sees him as a throwback to Pinocchio, or *Star Trek*'s Data. "He's the boy who wants to be human—but until then, there's some stuff he can do."

In the end, despite the nagging serial killer problem, Dexter's not a bad boy. He's a tortured soul, struggling for authenticity, destined to walk the earth alone. Furthermore, his victims are so abhorrently evil—a pedophile, a snuff filmmaker, a scumbag couple who enslave and dispose of illegal Cuban immigrants who default on their usurious transport fees—when he coolly vivisects their cheeks to extract a drop of blood for a trophy, we're more than willing to cut him some slack. M



THE REMAINS OF JESUS ACCORDING TO TV

"A filmmaker is claiming that the remains of Jesus have been discovered in a tomb in Jerusalem. Which is crazy, because Jesus made it perfectly clear that he wanted to be buried in the Bahamas, next to Anna Nicole."—Conan O'Brien

"James Cameron. I wonder if he might be...um, just destabilized? Thinks that he found the tomb of Jesus Christ. Who would have guessed that they'd find Jesus before bin Laden?"—David Letterman

COURTESY TMN





RESCUED SLAVES: Lending hard-muscle enforcement to the new law, the Royal Navy announced it would regard all slave ships as pirates



PLONKED DOWN before the Anna Nicole updates, the Victorians would probably conclude we're nearer the 18th century than their own

The man who 'murdered' slavery

Two centuries ago, a British backbencher changed an entire way of seeing the world

BY MARK STEYN

"William Wilberforce," writes Eric Metaxas in *Amazing Grace*, "was the happy victim of his own success. He was like someone who against all odds finds the cure for a horrible disease that's ravaging the world, and the cure is so overwhelmingly successful that it vanquishes the disease completely. No one suffers from it again—and within a generation or two no one remembers it ever existed."

What did Wilberforce "cure"? Two centuries ago, on March 25, 1807, one very persistent British backbencher secured the passage by Parliament of an Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade throughout His Majesty's realms and territories. It's not that no one remembers the disease ever existed, but that we recall it as a kind of freak pandemic—a SARS or bird flu that flares up and whirs round the world and is then eradicated. The American education system teaches it as such—as a kind of wicked perversion the Atlantic settlers had conjured out of their own ambition. In reality, it was more like the common cold—a fact of life. The institution predates the word's etymology, from the Slavs brought from eastern Europe to the glittering metropolis of Rome. It predates by some millennia the earliest laws, such as the Code of Hammurabi in Mesopotamia. The first legally recognized slave in the American colonies was owned by a black man who had himself arrived as an indentured servant. The first slave owners on the North American continent were hunter-gatherers. As Metaxas puts it, "Slavery was as accepted as birth and marriage and death, was so woven into the tapestry of human history that you could barely see its threads, much less pull them out. Everywhere on the globe, for 5,000 years, the idea of human civilization without slavery was unimaginable."

I'm not sure whether *Amazing Grace* the movie is the film of the book or whether *Amazing Grace* the biography is the book of the film. But Metaxas's book does a better job of conveying the scale of the challenge than Michael Apted's film. The director of *Gorky Park* and 007's *The World is not Enough* and the ongoing *7 Up* TV documentaries, Apted has made a conventional period biopic—men in wigs sparring with each other across the floor of the House of Commons, some rather flat scenes with the little woman back home, the now traditional figure of the "numinous Negro" (in Richard Brookhiser's phrase), though for once he's not played by Morgan Freeman, and a lot of argument by empathy—the chains in which slaves are transported to the Indies being slapped down dramatically on the tables of London dining rooms. In between come irritating slabs of plonkingly anachronistic dialogue—Wilberforce has to choose between doing "the work of God or the work of a political activist"—and more subtly so. Pitt the Younger rebukes his friend with the words, "I warn you as your prime minister"—not a phrase the king's first minister would have used back then, though I can imagine it from the mouth of Mr. Chrétien.

But the costume dramatics and the contemporary emotionalizing miss the scale of the abolitionist's achievement. "What Wilberforce vanquished was something even worse than slavery," says Metaxas, "something that was much more fundamental and can hardly be seen from where we stand today...he vanquished the very mindset that made slavery acceptable and allowed it to survive and thrive for millennia. He destroyed an entire way of seeing the world, one that had held sway from the beginning of history, and he replaced it with another way of seeing the world." Ownership of existing slaves continued in the British West Indies for another quarter century, and in the United States for another 60 years, and slave trading continued in Turkey until Ataturk abolished it in the twenties and in Saudi Arabia until it was (officially) banned in the sixties, and it persists in Africa and other pockets of the world to this day. But not as a broadly accepted "human good."

There was some hard muscle enforcement that accompanied the new law: the Royal Navy announced that it would regard all slave ships as pirates, and thus they were liable to sinking and their crews to execution. There had been some important court decisions: in the reign of William and Mary, Justice Holt had ruled that "one may be a villein in England, but not a slave," and in 1803 William Osgoode, chief justice of Lower Canada, ruled that it was not compatible with the principles of British law. But what was decisive was the way Wilberforce "murdered" (in Metaxas's word) the old acceptance of slavery by the wider society. As he wrote in 1787, "God almighty has set before me two great objects: the suppression of the slave trade and the reformation of manners."

The latter goal we would now formulate as "changing the culture"—which is what he did. The film of *Amazing Grace* shows the Duke of Clarence and other effete toffs reeling under a lot of lame bromides hurled by Wilberforce on behalf of "the people." But, in fact, "the people" were a large part of the problem. Then as now, citizens of advanced democracies are easily distracted. The 18th-century Church of England preached "a tepid kind of moralism" disconnected both from any serious faith and from the great questions facing the nation. It was a sensualist culture amusing itself to death. Wilberforce goes to a performance of *Don Juan*, is shocked by a provocative dance, and is then further shocked to discover the rest of the audience is too blasé even to be shocked. The Paris Hilton of the age, the Prince of Wales, was celebrated for having bedded 7,000 women and snipped from each a keepsake hair. Twenty-five per cent of all unmarried females in London were whores, the average age of a prostitute was 16, and many brothels prided themselves on offering only girls under the age of 14.

Many of these features—weedy faint-hearted mainstream churches, skanky celebs, weary provocations for jaded debauchees—will strike a chord in our own time. "There is a deal of ruin in a nation," remarked Adam Smith. England survived the 18th century, and maybe we will survive the 21st. But the life of William Wilberforce and the bicentennial of his extraordinary achievement remind us that great men don't shirk things because the focus-group numbers look unpromising. What we think of as "the Victorian era" was, in large part, an invention of Wilberforce which he succeeded in selling to his compatriots. We, children of the 20th century, mock our 19th century forebears as uptight prudes, moralists and do-gooders. If they were, it's because of Wilberforce. His legacy includes the very notion of a "social conscience": in the 1790s, a good man could stroll past an 11-year old prostitute on a London street without feeling a twinge of disgust or outrage; he accepted her as merely a feature of the landscape, like an ugly hill. By the 1890s, there were still child prostitutes, but there were also charities and improvement societies and orphanages. It is amazing to read a letter from Wilberforce and realize that he is, in fact, articulating precisely 220 years ago what New Yorkers came to know in the nineties as the "broken windows" theory: "The most effectual way to prevent greater crimes is by punishing the smaller."

The Victorians, if plunked down before the Anna Nicole updates for an hour or two, would probably conclude we're nearer the 18th century than their own. A "social conscience" obliges the individual to act. Today we call for action all the time, but mostly from government, which is another way of excusing us and allowing us to get on with the distractions of the day. Our schoolhouses revile the Victorian do-gooders as condescending racists and oppressors—though the single greatest force for ending slavery around the world was the Royal Navy. Isn't societal self-loathing just another justification for lethargy? After all, if the white man is inherently wicked, that pretty much absolves one from having to do anything. And so the same kind of lies we told ourselves about slaves we now tell ourselves about other faraway people, and for the same reason: because big changes are tough and who needs the hassle? The hardest thing in any society is "the reformation of manners." M



FINALLY, A BOOK ABOUT ...MEDICAL THINKING

On average, writes Dr. Jerome Groopman in his eye-opening *How Doctors Think* (Thomas Allen), physicians interrupt patients' descriptions of their symptoms within 12 seconds. That's fine if, as usual, they get it right. But mistakes do happen, rooted in impetience or in training that drives medical thought down well-worn paths. Being sure takes time, the most precious resource in health care, Groopman writes, and active patient participation is vital.

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INFPHOTO

MACLEAN'S

BESTSELLERS

COMPILED BY BRIAN BETHUNE

Fiction

		LAST WEEK (WEEKS ON LIST)
1.	THE BOOK OF NEGROES by Lawrence Hill	1 (6)
2	SHOPAHOLIC & BABY by Sophie Kinsella	(1)
3	YSABEL by Guy Gavriel Kay	2 (3)
4	THE END OF THE ALPHABET by C.S. Richardson	10 (2)
5	THE WATCHMAN by Robert Crais	(1)
6	TRAVELS IN THE SCRIPTORIUM by Paul Auster	4 (2)
7	HELPLESS by Barbara Gowdy	(1)
8	HOUSE OF MEETINGS by Martin Amis	5 (7)
9	MOTHERS AND SONS by Colm Tóibín	7 (8)
10	WOLF OF THE PLAINS by Conn Iggulden	6 (3)

Non-fiction

1	THE SECRET by Rhonda Byrne	4 (4)
2	THE GOD DELUSION by Richard Dawkins	1 (20)
3	IN DEFENSE OF ATHEISM by Michel Onfray	5 (3)
4	I'VE GOT A HOME IN GLORY LAND by Karolyn Smardz Frost	(1)
5	APOLLO'S ARROW by David Orell	(1)
6	CITIZEN OF THE WORLD by John English	(1)
7	ABOUT ALICE by Calvin Trillin	8 (6)
8	EDITH WHARTON by Hermione Lee	6 (2)
9	VICTORY AT VIMY by Ted Barris	2 (3)
10	SPYMISTRESS by William Stevenson	3 (4)



LEONARD ASPER, CanWest's CEO (centre), now owns one of the few Democrat-leaning magazines that has suffered during the Bush years

The journal of lofty delusions

Can The New Republic regain its lost glory, and make money, with the Aspers in charge?

BY ANDY LAMEY • Sigmund Freud once said that our greatest affirmations are negations: we reveal our deepest selves when we criticize and oppose. Whether or not this is true of people, it sums up American political magazines, which thrive when they have something to kick against. During the Clinton administration, for example, right wing organs like *The American Spectator* saw readership hit an all time high. Similarly, the Iraq war has been a boon to *The Nation*, a leftist weekly.

The New Republic rose to prominence in the 1980s when it was the leading liberal magazine during the Reagan years. More recently, however, it's fallen on hard times, one of the few Democratic outlets to see its readership decline under George W. Bush. Now its sale to CanWest Global, owned by Canada's Asper family, has long time *TNR* watchers wondering about its future. Can it regain its lost glory? Much will depend on whether the Aspers grasp the central paradox of small circulation, high prestige publications. At their best, they offer articles written in a spirit of fearless political honesty. Those who get involved with the same magazines on the business side, however, often do so in a moment of massive self deception.

TNR's proud legacy is due to its long time owner, Martin Peretz, known to everyone—including me, when I was a *TNR* intern 12 years ago—simply as Marty. In 1981 Marty appointed a brilliant young law student named Michael Kinsley as editor. Kinsley had a talent for recognizing the talents of others, and he discovered an entire generation of gifted writers. Many of the best were Jewish Ivy League graduates, and this may be why *TNR*'s articles often shared a certain sensibility. Reading *TNR* at its height was like listening to a smart and funny friend—who'd gone to a posh school in New England and now worked in Washington—regale you with eye-popping stories about American politics, all offered up in a dry sardonic tone.

The 1990s, by contrast, were not *TNR*'s decade. Editor Andrew Sullivan published several controversial cover stories, including a notorious attack on Bill Clinton's health care plan, that were so ill informed they tarnished the magazine's reputation. Then two of its writers, Ruth Shalit and Stephen Glass, were revealed to be a plagiarist and a serial fabricator, respectively. *TNR* was like an old friend who'd once been so full of promise, trapped in a spiral of self-destruction. Today, *TNR* resembles someone in a recovery program: it is always issuing heartfelt apologies. *TNR* is sorry for that health care article it ran a decade ago. Sorry for its support of the Iraq war. Sorry about a writer who improperly used a pseudonym in an online forum.

Now come the Aspers. Traditionally, media tycoons buy journals of opinion when they're in the grip of one of two delusions. The first is that they have something important to say about global affairs. It pains me to say this, but Marty fell into this category. Every issue he published contained at least one article that could be summed up in four words: Israel is the greatest! As readers of their pro-Israel newspapers well know, the Aspers will enthusiastically continue this tradition. (Now, to the people of Israel, I can only say: may peace be with you. But to millionaires who buy magazines to indulge their hobby horses, I ask: why always Israel? Why can't, just once, the mad obsession be with Sweden, say, or Burkina Faso? And why always politics? Why are press lords never monomaniacs about their deep love of jazz dance, or old *Beachcombers* episodes?)

More worrisome is delusion two—that owners can make a highbrow magazine profitable. Ominously, the Aspers appear to be under both delusions at once. They claim *TNR* will be profitable in three years, and have installed interim publisher Greg MacNeil, who once ran *Saturday Night*, *Elm Street* and *Shift*. With each title, MacNeil pursued profitability by reducing the number of issues published. Given this history, one wonders if his perfect magazine would only come out once per annum. If so, he's come close to that goal. *Saturday Night*, *Elm Street* and *Shift* are no longer publishing at all. Already, MacNeil has sliced *TNR*'s frequency in half.

Marty's unforgettable greatness lay in the fact that, although he always cut costs, he was willing to underwrite brilliant political journalism for its own sake. *TNR* admirers can only hope the Aspers soon reach the same level of enlightened self awareness. In return, I am willing to fly to a certain Mideast nation and acknowledge its excellence in person, on behalf of everyone who has ever cared about one of America's great magazines. M



STOP THE PRESSES **MOLLY IVINS' DOG**

'In the Feb. 9 guest 'Point Austin' column by Dave Denison, we inadvertently but briefly changed the gender of Molly Ivins' dog Sh-t from female to male by referring to her in passing as 'him.' "—*Austin Chronicle*, March 1. Texas-born columnist Ivins, who recently died, had a dog she named 'Sh-t" for the purpose of getting its name into the papers, upsetting the sensibilities of editors and readers alike.

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY RONIT NOVAK



When do you tell it that it's not a sports car?

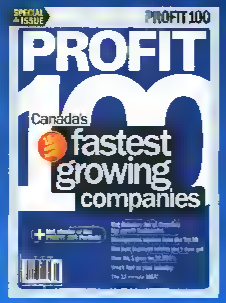
From conception it blurred the line between practical and thrilling. To that add a more muscular stance and a new, more powerful engine that heightens performance but uses less fuel. Perhaps some things are better left unsaid. Porsche Cayenne. There is no substitute.

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MARCHING OFF TO WAR: As Leonidas (left), Gerard Butler leads a troop of bodybuilder brutes who wear their abs like rippling armour

COURTESY OF WARNER BROS

Coming through slaughter, gladly

No wonder Hitler loved these guys—Spartan supermen celebrate the joy of war in '300'

BY BRIAN D. JOHNSON • Movie audiences have become so inured to carnage that instilling shock and awe with a battle scene these days is next to impossible. When Mel Gibson tried to raise the bar with *Apocalypto*, the buckets of gore seemed more ridiculous than horrific. But *300* is a war movie unlike any other. Take this scene: after slaughtering countless Persians, Spartan warriors stack their bodies into a mountainous rampart, a vertical mass grave. Then as a fresh wave of enemy troops tries to scale this blockade of corpses, the mountain begins to move, pushed from behind, and suddenly the Persians are crushed by an avalanche of their own dead.

Loosely based on the graphic novel by Frank Miller (*Sin City*), this bloodthirsty blend of history and fantasy pushes the sword-and-sandal epic into digital overdrive. It tells the story of the battle of Thermopylae in 480 BCE, when 300 Spartans fought to the death against a vast force of Persian invaders, inspiring the rest of Greece to unite against a common foe. In an age where every war movie is an anti-war movie—*Jarhead*, *Troy*, *Flags of Our Fathers*, *Letters from Iwo Jima*—*300* is an anomaly. There's not a whisper of pacifism in the entire film, which heartily embraces the Spartan ideal that there is nothing more exquisite than killing and being killed on the battlefield for the glory of one's country.

Although the battle is ancient history, the movie recasts it as stylized fable. And it's hard not to read some contemporary resonance into *300*'s tale of buff superheroes saving Western democracy and freedom from what it calls "Asia's endless hordes." Of course, the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy could be viewed through the same geopolitical prism. And within blight of satanic sultans, leprous storm troopers, and rampaging elephants, *300*'s apocalyptic view of a few good men fighting an Eastern scourge is reminiscent of the Tolkien epics. But what's unique about this picture is how blithely it embraces the joy of war and the severe beauty of violent death.

Director Zach Snyder (*Dawn of the Dead*) gets away with it by leaving realism in the dust. Shooting almost entirely on sound stages, in a painterly world forged by computer graphics, he mimics Miller's haute pulp vision with tableaux of slashing, impaling and decapitation that splatter the screen with Jackson Pollock blood. The visuals have more depth than the characters. Although Snyder uses live actors, they have the unearthly lustre of special effects—a legion of near-naked, Herculean warriors in black leather briefs who wear their rippling abs like suits of armour. They are led by Scottish hunk Gerard Butler (*The Phantom of the Opera*, *Beowulf & Grendel*), who plays Sparta's King Leonidas with a muscled ferocity that makes the Terminator look like a girlie man.

It's hard to say just who this pageant of testosterone is designed for. *300* doesn't quite cut it as a chick flick (too brutal), or a gay flick (unlike the real Spartans, these ones seem firmly heterosexual). But, as if to broaden its appeal to young men, the filmmakers have fleshed out the novel's slender narrative with slick sideshows of soft-core porn. Leonidas gets pre-war sex from his queen (Lena Headley), who later fights off political treachery with carnal favours. And Sparta's oracles are a writhing harem of nubile babes ruled by a cabal of hideous, carbuncular elders.

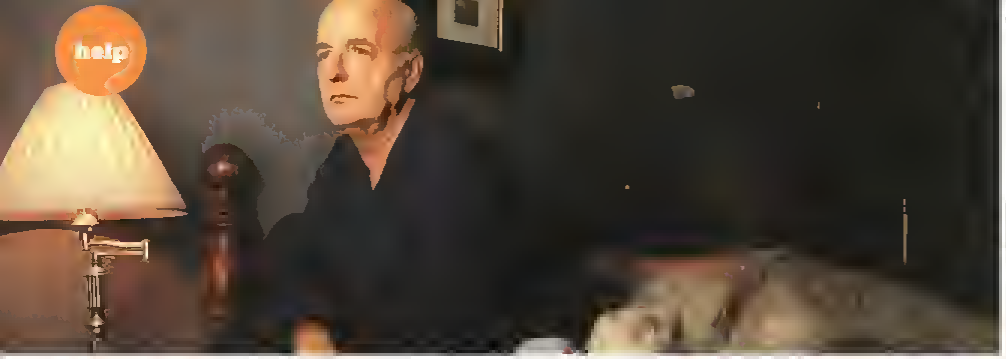
There's something brazenly fascistic in how *300* champions muscularity, militarism and physical purity over ugliness and disease. But then Sparta's warrior nation was a model for Hitler's Germany. And with its stunning choreography of shields, swords and spears, *300* plays like the bastard offspring of *Braveheart* and *Triumph of the Will*.

Unlike the Nazis, the Spartans were defending their freedom from foreign tyrants, not laying waste to the world. But as *300*'s messianic hero happily leads his troops into what is essentially an act of mass suicide, it's hard not to think of fascists, suicide bombers and fundamentalists who promote the righteous beauty of marching off to a perfect death. Some are remembered as monsters, such as Jim Jones, who led over 900 followers to the grave in 1978 (and is now the subject of two new films). Others, like Leonidas, are heroes. Today we associate martyrdom with Islamic terrorism, but much of Western civilization, and Christianity, is founded on the idea of brutal self-sacrifice. And the image of Leonidas submitting to the artful slaughter, his sculpted body pierced by arrows, recalls paintings of the Crucifixion—*300* could well be subtitled *The Passion of the Spartans*. M



WE'RE STALKING ... JAKE GYLLENHAAL

The 26-year-old hunk has played a gay cowboy and killer-stalking cartoonist, but playing a real-life uncle proved too much. He recently asked his sister, actress Maggie Gyllenhaal, if he could try changing his new niece's diaper. "I wanted to see what it was like. So I put her on the changing table. I really never knew, and I am naive, of course, but I never knew that it was orange. I have a very short gag reflex. I started gagging and handed her back."



IF YOU NEED people to be around, tell them. But 'you are not responsible for taking care of others who are distraught at your news.'

Friends, family mean well, but...

When you've just been given a devastating diagnosis, some responses aren't helpful

BY JULIA MCKINNELL • On four separate occasions, Dr. Jessie Gruman was told she had a life threatening disease. Three times it was cancer, the fourth time, a dangerous heart condition. Each time, "I couldn't talk to anyone," she writes in a new book called *Aftershock: What to Do When the Doctor Gives You—or Someone You Love—a Devastating Diagnosis*.

Gruman interviewed 250 people for stories of how each person coped, with a focus on the first 48 hours. "For two days," she writes, "I mostly alternated between feeling numb and visiting and revisiting every worst case scenario about my future my imagination conjured." She ached for more information. "But I had to wait for the test results to come back before I could see the doctor again, and those 36 hours were excruciating." Everyone Gruman interviewed hated the lack of control. "We all felt driven to find answers quickly," which is something Gruman cautions against. "A lot of us made hasty decisions about our care that we regretted later."

Slow down, Gruman writes. "It is a rare exception that any condition must be responded to within 48 hours. If it is so urgent, you are probably already in hospital." You are in a crisis, however, so treat it as one. "Don't go to work for at least 48 hours and cancel your social engagements. Don't try to go on as though nothing is happening."

Repetitive and intrusive thoughts are common. Many people spend hours going over their past behaviour to establish the cause of their disease. A person might think, "I'm sure I got this disease because I have been so depressed and angry for so long." That same person might want to control their emotions, to be positive, as though their negativity was the cause. Gruman says there is an "intuitive—but false—link between optimism and health. This is not a normal time, and while controlling your emotions may help you take in the meaning of your diagnosis, expressing fear, anger, sadness and guilt will not make your disease worse. Conversely, remaining chippet and upbeat won't make it better."

If you need family and friends to be with you, tell them, she says. But if you need to be alone, tell them that, too. "You are not responsible for taking care of others who are distraught at your news."

Be forewarned. When friends hear the news, they will respond usually with stories of how they know someone with the same disease. For instance, "My friend's aunt had exactly your condition and she's fine." If the stories start to get on your nerves, writes Gruman, "distract yourself by keeping count of how many times you hear them."

David, a 64-year-old environmentalist, told Gruman he received seven copies of Lance Armstrong's *It's Not About the Bike*. "I'm sure my friends thought it would be inspirational, but I'll tell you, I read the first couple of chapters and quit."

Family members are not always the best people to help, she writes. "This is an emotional time. Relationships intensify." If you don't have clergy or you don't wish to involve family, you can seek out a counsellor who specializes in patients with serious illnesses. Gruman cites the example of a husband who kept saying his wife would be fine. His wife just looked at him, says Gruman. "That's what you keep saying," she said. "But at night when you're asleep, I realize that I'm dying and you won't let me talk about it."

Many doctors are reluctant to take charge the way they used to, says Gruman. "There is considerable evidence that doctors deliver care that is based on the best available evidence only about half the time." Unless the diagnosis is basal cell carcinoma or diabetes, for which there's only one treatment, there are always treatment options. It's imperative to get a second opinion. If you're worried this might offend, Gruman suggests telling your doctor: "My family insists that I get the opinions of a number of specialists before we move ahead."

If a physician tells you, "there is nothing we can do," find a new physician. "While it is true that many diseases cannot be cured, it is never true that nothing can be done. A physician can refer the patient to a pain management specialist to reduce discomfort."

Googling the disease often backfires, leaving patients more frightened than informed. You should know basic facts about your condition, though, so be sure to ask. "If you know what the pills do, you will be more likely to take them as directed. If you know what a certain test will tell the doctor, you'll be more likely to show up for it." M



MOST IMPROVED CHRIS MARTIN AND COLDPLAY

The band isn't just about to record a new song. If Martin is to be believed, it's about to enter a state of perfection. Martin says that Coldplay is returning to the studio to create a totally new sound, which is, he says, "basically genius." They set a high standard for themselves, and in return they expect as much from the world. Martin says that everybody "has to hear this song before we die, otherwise we'll be terribly depressed."

PHOTOGRAPH BY ROBYN CUMMING

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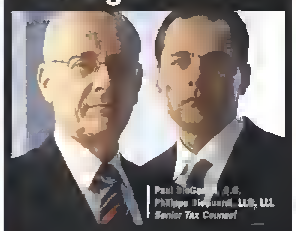
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Cow's tongue: It's so...highbrow

The French want to get their cuisine added to UNESCO's list of intangible cultural heritage

BY PAUL WELLS • The thing about *langue de boeuf sauce piquante* is that there is no way to kid yourself about the principal ingredient, which is indeed a cow's tongue thick, soft, flexible and bumpy So once you nudge aside the potatoes and shovel through the cayenne pepper sauce, this example of French country home cooking comes down, unavoidably, to a little tongue-on-tongue action with a big dead ruminant *Moo Come over and say hi, sailor* The thought rushed to mind with the first bite as I sat at a long table at Crémérie-Restaurant Polidor, a historic French bistro in Paris's Odeon district, and it was not easily banished Wine helped I had the Chateau Magondeau 2004 But still

I soldiered on in the belief that I was sampling what a handful of French chefs and politicians maintain is a masterpiece of human civilization Not the *langue de boeuf* specifically, but French cuisine in general This is no idle boast, it's a project in December, the Institut Européen d'Histoire et des Cultures de l'Alimentation and the University of Tours called on the French government to get the nation's cuisine formally added to UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity

This needs explaining

UNESCO is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization It's perhaps best known for keeping a list of World Heritage Sites But several years ago, the cultural guardians of UNESCO started to realize that human heritage resides not just in places but in rites, tales and artifacts So in Paris in 2003, UNESCO adopted the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Since then, countries that have ratified it have been nominating their most distinctive traditions for recognition and preservation

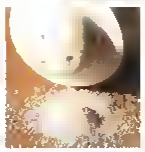
Among the activities thus honoured are the four voice polyphonic singing of the Aka pygmies of the Central African Republic, the intricate woodcarving skills of the Zafimaniry population of Madagascar, and the Fujara, a long three-holed Slovakian flute. Some of the most prominent French chefs have responded that surely a really good cassoulet or Bearnaise sauce should rank up there too "It's not a question of claiming that our cuisine is more exceptional," said Francis Chevrier one of the leaders of the movement, "but to state that for us, cuisine is intimately tied into our culture, our heritage and our identity"

Dominique Fouchard could hardly disagree. He's the chef who made my *langue de boeuf* He has been cooking at Polidor for 20 years "Family cooking," he says, "like at home" Since it opened in 1845, Polidor's very lack of pretension has drawn the greats Andre Gide ate here, Hemingway, Kerouac. Quentin Tarantino stops by when he's in town. The specials are written on chalkboards in the cursive handscript that seems to be a requirement for a Paris restaurant licence Wine specials are handwritten on mirrors None of it is less ritualized than Aka pygmy song

"The principle of French cuisine is to not alter the flavour of the ingredients," says Fouchard, who is not often called upon to meditate about the essence of his craft but who soon warms to his task "Everything is done quite carefully so the molecules of the food aren't altered Almost all of the recipes call for you to heat *sur le bord du feu* at the edge of the flame"

Anyone wondering what Canada's contribution to the world's intangible cultural heritage is can keep wondering About 50 countries have ratified the heritage convention, but Canada hasn't Which distresses Gerald Pocius, a professor of folklore at Memorial University in St John's, Nfld He was one of the convention's authors But Ottawa has quibbles with the convention's definition of heritage. Since it hasn't ratified the convention, Canada can't propose anything for UNESCO recognition What might go on the global list from Canada? As a good Newfoundlander, Pocius admits a soft spot for mummering, in which disguised revellers wander from house to house at Christmas, asking to be "llowed in" Others might propose Haida Trickster myths It's all hypothetical "By not ratifying, Canada ensures that nothing Canadian will be listed," Pocius says

Back at Crémerie Restaurant Polidor, I asked Fouchard to tell me about the best meals he's ever cooked "When an author writes a novel, it can be very good but it is never as good as the dream he had," he said wistfully "This is the same I've made dishes that left people ecstatic, but it still wasn't perfect Because for me it was a dream" M



TODAY'S SPECIAL . LOW-SODIUM SEA SALT

Tha ubiquitous additiva is hard on your artaries owing to tha presence of sodium but a British firm's salt which contains magnasium as wall as potassium and 60 par cant lass sodium, is hitting the lucrativa U S markat American food procassors are all too aagar to gat thair hands on such altarnativa salts because tha Amarican Medical Association last yaar askad Washington to revoka salt's status as a "ganarally racognizad as safa' substance

JAMES L. STANFIELD NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC/GETTY

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Carpooling to rehab—Hollywood will cut its emissions



SCOTT FESCHUK

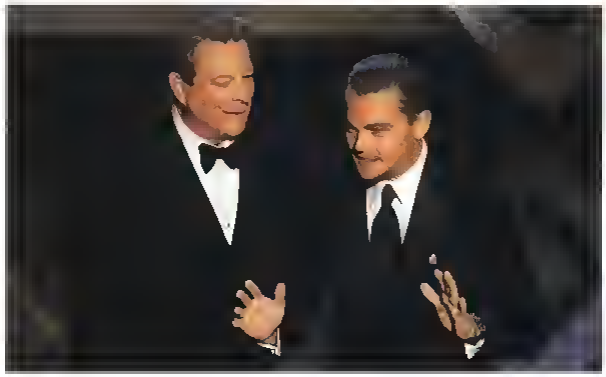
Hey, global warming—you had things pretty good there for awhile, didn't you? It was all going your way: the increasing emissions, the accelerating greenhouse effect, the polar ice cap eroding more rapidly than John Travolta's sex appeal. It looked like nothing could stop your efforts to sauté the planet in a terrifying apocalypse that would, according to *An Inconvenient Truth*, unfold inexorably and with surprisingly cheesy graphics.

But then Leonardo DiCaprio took the stage at the 79th Annual Academy Awards and—perhaps caught up in the excitement of the moment, perhaps fearful that the extravagantly girthed Al Gore would otherwise eat him on the spot—proudly announced that for the first time in history the Oscars had "gone green."

No one knew what the hell that meant exactly—although it did give credence to the rumours that Ellen DeGeneres's monologue was crafted by strangers she met riding public transit. But the gist of the message was clear enough: Hollywood had symbolically declared war on climate change. And nobody does things symbolically quite like the entertainment industry.

Oooo, I wouldn't want to be you right now, global warming. You are in for a real lickin'! Our top celebrities and also Daryl Hannah are united in pledging to totally, like, combat you. I read that even Otter from *Animal House* is on board. And once famous movie stars embrace a cause, they simply do not let up until outright triumph is achieved ... or a few weeks have passed ... or maybe someone comes out with an awareness ribbon in a color that goes slightly better with their eyes.

Don't get me wrong, climate change. Celebrities are not going to *completely* alter their lifestyles in your name. They're certainly not going to stop flying on private jets. Golly, no. And most won't be living in smaller houses or living in fewer houses or owning fewer SUVs or riding in fewer limos or doing anything that requires real sacrifice or, if we're going to be honest about it, anything that requires any sacrifice. But they *will* write hectoring rock songs in which they badger us to turn down the thermostat. They *will* continue to appear alongside Al Gore, and not only because he makes them look thin. (Sometimes they'll even nod gravely and say, "Yeah, he's right," though only if someone puts it on the teleprompter for them.) And, if pressed, they *will* try not to show up too stoned to the next *Vanity Fair* photo shoot of scantily clad eco celebrities dressed like wood nymphs.



Stars will keep appearing with Al Gore, and not just because he makes them look thin

It's true, climate change, that the rich and famous—by virtue of their lifestyles and general all-round fabulousness—tend to be among the most grievous personal contributors of carbon emissions: all those huge mansions, all those heated pools, all those high-emission robot hookers* (*Charlie Sheen only). Celebrities typically imprint upon the earth a carbon footprint of sasquatchian proportions. But that's not the point, climate change. The point is that as of now, these people of action—these role models, idolized by teenaged girls and certain victims of severe head trauma* (*Charlie Sheen only)—are completely and unwaveringly dedicated to caring deeply about you, possibly for the next several months or until Matthew McConaughey gets bored and starts caring about lepers or the lactose intolerant instead.

A calendar of expected highlights from the summer to come:

May 3 In an image that promotes environmentally sustainable transport, actor Rob Schneider is photographed on a rickshaw.

May 22 Rosie O'Donnell tells her fellow panellists on *The View* that in a selfless effort to reduce the number of animals that produce harmful methane emissions, she is going to personally keep eating three steaks and four burgers per day. Plus the one hoof.

June 16 William Shatner replaces his hairpiece with twin solar panels—says his ego is now self-powered and off the grid.

But then a customer comes and he has to get down and pull.

June 24 Mel Gibson arranges to be pulled over on suspicion of drunk driving for the expressed purpose of blaming global warming on the Jews.

June 28 *Us Weekly* reports Sharon Stone has switched over to a hybrid vibrator.

July 11 Photographed yet again *sans* pants, Britney Spears is hailed by Friends of the Earth for promoting the biodegradable underwear industry.

July 20 Snoop Dogg enters his third gruelling month of trying to come up with a rhyme for "Kyoto."

Aug. 4 Vin Diesel officially changes his first name to Bio.

Aug. 6 In an example to up-and-coming celebrities across Hollywood, Nicole Richie and Lindsay Lohan carpool to rehab.

Aug. 11 Determined to reduce electrical usage, CBS agrees to unplug Andy Rooney from Mondays to Saturdays.

Aug. 28 A butler replaces the inefficient 25-watt incandescent bulb in Paris Hilton's head with a seven-watt fluorescent; friends report no discernible impact on brainpower. M

ON THE WEB. For Scott Feschuk's take on the news of the day, visit his audioblog. **www.macleans.ca/feschuk**

KEVIN WINTER/GETTY



ARCADE FIRE'S new album, *Neon Bible*, is dripping with pessimism and paranoia

MUSIC 1

REIGNITING A FIRE



It's a funny thing, success. Three years ago, when nobody had heard of them, the Arcade Fire responded to the deaths of family members with *Funeral*—an album that, its title notwithstanding, came off like a celebration of life. Now, having established themselves as perhaps the world's most revered indie band, the Montrealers return with *Neon Bible*, which is dripping with pessimism and paranoia. This will not sit well with devotees seeking the rush they got the first time they heard *Funeral*. But then, the music world is littered with casualties of ill-advised attempts to duplicate breakthrough albums (See Strokes, The). The easy criticism of *Neon Bible* is that it brazenly reaches for the epic, which frequently borders on the overwrought. But whereas a restrained middle act sags badly, it's when the band is at its least subtle that it's most interesting. An overtly political, overtly anti-religious anthem with a pipe organ and a chorus about "working for the church while your family dies" should be embarrassing; instead, *Intervention* is hauntingly compelling. So is the apocalyptic *Windowsill*. And then there's *(Antichrist Television Blues)*, in which Win Butler shamelessly apes Springsteen. None of this recreates the euphoria of hearing *Rebellion (Lies)* or *Neighborhood #3 (Power Out)* for the first time. That euphoria, though, was largely based on a sense of discovering something that—its Talking Heads influences notwithstanding—was unlike anything we'd heard before. Had *Neon Bible* been *Funeral II*, we wouldn't have discovered anything new at all. And that's when one of music's most inventive bands really would have let its fans down. *Adam Radwanski*

FILM 2

BACK TO HIS ROOTS

Cillian Murphy, a master of the creepy big screen villain (*Batman Begins*, *Red Eye*), takes a dramatic turn as a 1920s Irish freedom fighter in the award-winning film, *The Wind That Shakes the Barley* (March 16). The Irish-born actor's performance proves he can carry a film himself—and, more importantly, has the skills to be a red-carpet regular. *John Intini*

BOOKS 3

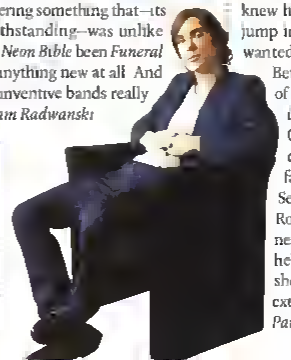
NO COMPLAINTS



In *You Don't Love Me Yet*, Jonathan Lethem focuses on the lives of a no-name rock band in L.A. with peculiar day jobs—the bassist is a phone operator at a "complaint line" and the drummer works at a "masturbation boutique." It doesn't compare to *Motherless Brooklyn*, Lethem's 2000 masterpiece, but his latest is a wonderful quick read that's rich with detail and his trademark wit. *JJ*

CLASSICAL 4

MODERN MAESTRO



It's as if Yannick Nezet Séguin knew his career was about to jump into warp drive and he wanted to justify all the fuss. Between his five recording of Bruckner's *7th Symphony in E Major* with the Orchestre Metropolitain du Grand Montreal last fall and its release, Nézet-Séguin was appointed the Rotterdam Philharmonic's next music director. At 31, he's a global star. This CD shows why: sweep, dignity, extraordinary poise. *Paul Wells*

OVO 5

A CRICK FLICK

Shut Up & Sing captures three tumultuous years in the life of a band, a war and a presidency—all undergoing wild reversals of fortune. This riveting documentary is in the same league as *Gimme Shelter* and *Don't Look Back*. Beautifully directed, it shows how a casual Bush bashing remark divorced the bestselling Dixie Chicks from their audience—and made them a better band. A chick flick to make you laugh, cry and cheer. *Brian D. Johnson*

TV 6

THE BALL'S IN YOUR HANDS

When *Friday Night Lights* debuted last fall, we urged readers to watch the terrific new drama about life in a football-obsessed Texas town. Sadly, as the ratings indicate, too few took the hint. Luckily there's still a month left to save the best written, acted and directed show on television. This team deserves another season. *JJ*



BOOKS 7

DISHING THE DIRT

Marjorie Harris, Canada's doyenne of gardening, offers the basics in *How to Make a Garden. The 7 Essential Steps for the Canadian Gardener*. She reveals how to plan a garden, understand soil, and avoid common pitfalls in shopping for plants. And she imparts essential knowledge every gardener needs—including the crucial importance of what kind of soil to use in containers. *Jared Mitchell*



THE END

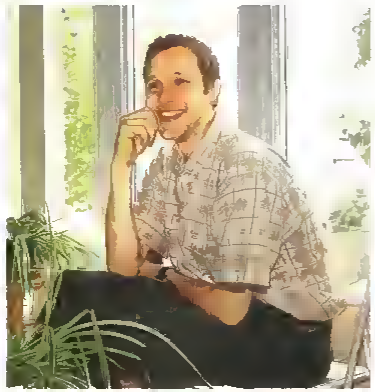
ERIC WHITEHOUSE

1972-2007

He loved engines and his garden, taking care of his son—and his Mark 10 cigarettes

Eric Whitehouse was born on Oct. 29, 1972, just outside of Granby, Que., in the Eastern Townships, to a mother he would come to adore and a father he would never know. Douglas Whitehouse left while Eric was still in diapers, leaving Lucienne Larose to raise him as a brother to Anne-Marie and Roger Pierre, her children from a previous relationship. They never knew the difference.

He was a French kid with an English name, and a goofball from the moment he stood on two legs. At the age of 4 he was following a cow around the family barn when the animal, apparently nervous of the chase given by this relentless child, expressed as much with its bowels. Eric slipped and fell in the resulting mess, and Anne-Marie braced herself for her brother's fits and screams. Instead, he fixed her with a look somewhere between wonder and merriment. "Wow, this stuff is actually warm," he said.



The tall, skinny kid went to Sacre Coeur high school, going through the requisite punk phase of dyed hair and innocent rebellion. At 15 he started smoking, and would remain loyal to his pack-a-day habit of Mark 10 cigarettes. There was no middle ground with Eric—he loved or hated everything—and he loved everything about smoking, both the act and the quiet moments it afforded. "That habit is going to kill you," his sister Anne-Marie said more than once. "I'm not ready to quit yet," was his standard reply.

After high school, Eric worked in a number of factories around Granby. One summer after graduation he lived with his sister in Montreal, working as a face painter at La Ronde, the city's large amusement park. Typically enough, he loved the job but not Montreal: too much noise, too few trees. After that, he didn't even like to visit. He left the city well before the arrival of Quebec's winter cold, which he loathed almost as much.

Nor did Eric like to have his picture taken, though it's difficult to see why. His smile lit up the few pictures his family have of him, even though he rarely looked at the camera, as if he hated the attention. At 24, Eric and his girlfriend at the time had a baby boy, who grew up to have his father's height and massive, sometimes clumsy hands. The boy also has his father's predilection for modesty, he doesn't even want his name mentioned.

Eric was a self-taught mechanic who picked up English by reading about engine innards in English textbooks. At five-foot-eleven and not even 150 lb., he never had time to fatten up—either working, fixing something or spending time with his son. He and his girlfriend had long grown apart, and by 2004 Eric was lonely. Meeting someone was difficult, he didn't like bars or going out, and he wasn't going to find a date hanging around his mechanic buddies.

In 2004 he posted his profile on a popular online dating service. Marie-Josee Minier saw it, read about his uncomplicated nature—he liked being at home, working in the garden, taking care of his son—and sent him an email. Their first date was in a nature reserve outside of Granby. A year later, the pair bought a house and a chunk of land in a subdivision with a view of Bromont Mountain. Shortly after the couple moved in, Eric began work on restoring his 1987 BMW 325, sanding and polishing the cylinder heads while watching his nightly hour-long dose of *The Simpsons* in French. His dream was to grow old with Marie-Josée and tour around Quebec's classic car circuit.

Eric's disdain for Christmas, New Year's, Easter, Thanksgiving, Saint-Jean Baptiste Day and every other holiday extended only as far as Halloween. Eric *loved* Halloween, and the couple's inaugural celebration together saw Eric dressing up as a Camaro-loving greaseball complete with mullet and tight pants. There were also jack-o'-lanterns and tombstones, which Eric carved out of Styrofoam insulation sheets, a Mark 10 Medium dangling from his mouth.

For three years Eric had worked at Delta Transformers in Granby as a general labourer. Though he didn't have any accreditation, he was a quick learner, and last October he began working on the company's efficiency tables, mapping out how long each task at the plant was to take. To do so he took classes at the local CEGEP, where he had to adjust to a new reality: thanks to Quebec's new anti-smoking laws, Eric had to step outside in the cold to smoke a cigarette—and he hated the cold, so much so that during the winter he kept his house at a balmy 34° C.

At about 10 a.m. on Feb. 15, Eric stepped into the chilly morning air and the smoking shelter just outside the Delta plant. The night before had brought roughly four feet of snow, and a few minutes into his cigarette the roof collapsed under its weight. Two other employees managed to escape, but Eric was trapped. It took 40 minutes to free him. Though he was alive when rescuers pulled him out, Eric went into cardiac arrest and was pronounced dead at the Granby hospital.

BY MARTIN PATRIQUIN







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